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Esther and Bernice
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ESTHER AND BERENICE

Two Plays

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD

ROSAS
GALLIPOLI
RIGHT ROYAL
THE FAITHFUL
SELECTED POEMS
LOST ENDEAVOUR
A MAINSAIL HAUL
CAPTAIN MARGARET
REYNARD THE FOX
THE DAFFODIL FIELDS
THE OLD FRONT LINE
MULTITUDE AND SOLITUDE
COLLECTED POEMS AND PLAYS
SALT WATER POEMS AND BALLADS
GOOD FRIDAY AND OTHER POEMS
THE TRAGEDY OF POMPEY THE GREAT
PHILIP THE KING, AND OTHER POEMS
THE TRAGEDY OF MAN, AND OTHER POEMS
LOLLINGDON DOWNS AND OTHER POEMS
THE STORY OF A ROUND-HOUSE AND OTHER POEMS
THE LOCKED CHEST; AND THE SWEEPS OF NINETY-EIGHT
THE EVERLASTING MERCY AND THE WIDOW IN THE BYE STREET

ESTHER AND BERENICE

TWO PLAYS

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY
FORT WAYNE AND ALLEN COUNTY, IND.

BY

JOHN MASEFIELD

New York
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1922

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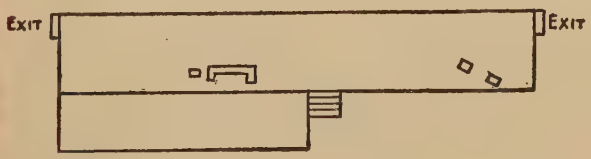
This adaptation of "Esther" was produced by Miss Penelope Wheeler at Wootton, Berks, on the evening of the 5th May, 1921, with the following cast:—

ESTHER	Miss Penelope Wheeler
RACHEL	Miss Geraldine Berkeley
MORDECAI	Mr. Richard Elwes
HAMAN	Mr. Kenneth Rae
HYDASPES	Mr. W. H. Nurse
AHASUERUS	Mr. Eric Dance
ASAPH	Mr. James Pearce
ZERESH	Mrs. Vidler
CHORUS	Miss Katharine Richards Miss Judith Masefield
GUARD	Mr. P. Venables

The Play was performed without scenery upon a stage hung with curtains. There were exits and entrances R. and L. at Back, and an extra exit and approach by steps to the stage from Front Centre.



Avant-scène.

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PREFACE

I have been asked to write a few words to explain why these adaptations of Racine were made.

They were made for the use of a little company of amateur players who wished to try their art in verse plays, yet found that of the many fine poetical plays in the English language, not many suited their needs. The Elizabethan poetical play needs a large cast and a fairly large stage. The Restoration poetical play is of an old fashion. The modern poetical play is usually not enough of the stage nor of the people to hold the audience to which these players perform.

The stage upon which this company of players performs measures eleven feet by thirteen feet, so that no big production is

possible. The men players are often kept from performing by their work or study, so that no play with a large man cast can be undertaken. We had produced some half dozen plays of different kinds, and had learned that the poetical plays were by much the most popular. We wanted to do others. We wanted, in short, plays in verse that were of the theatre, that could be done with few properties and no scenery, with small casts of from six to nine persons. Knowing how keenly sensitive an English audience is to verse, we wanted plays with fine situations and stirring declamation. The French classical tragedies seemed to offer a foundation of what we needed, so these versions were made.

The play of *Esther* is an adaptation, not a translation, because in *Esther* our audience asked for something more than the French formality allowed. We could make nothing

of Racine's choruses in this play in translation; after some attempts we gave them up, and substituted others. When we came to rehearse the play, we found it too short; we therefore lengthened it. *Berenice* is a translation.

JOHN MASEFIELD.

CHARACTERS

ESTHER
RACHEL
MORDECAI
HAMAN
HYDASPES
AHASUERUS
ASAPH
ZERESH
CHORUS OF JEWISH CHILDREN
GUARDS, ETC.

Parts of Acts 1, 3, and 4 of this play are translated from the Tragedy of Esther, by Racine.

PROPERTIES

ACT I.

Settle with cushions, to Left.
Seats for CHORUS, Left, with rug.
Orders for MORDECAI, Right.

ACT II.

Couch R. for AHASUERUS, with cushions and cover.
Sword at foot of bed.
Stool at foot of bed.
Cup for drink, Left, off.
Bell for clink, Right, off.
Drum, Left, off, with the GUARDS, for their singing.
Battens to keep couch steady.

ACT III.

Settle, bedecked, to the Right, with new covers and cushions, as the throne.
Sceptre, AHASUERUS, Right.
Roll or scroll, AHASUERUS, Right.
Spear for GUARD, Right.

ACT IV.

Throne, bedecked as in Act III, but Centre.
Fruit and two brass dishes for feast (oranges and lemons only).
Bronze bowls and cups for feast.
Stool for feast.
Orders, Right, off, for AHASUERUS, when he goes out.
Second stool or footstool to Right of throne.
Signet for ASAPH to give to the King, Right.

ESTHER AND BERENICE

Two Plays

ESTHER

ACT I.

SCENE:—ESTHER'S *apartments.*

(RACHEL *enters back, comes down L. of* ESTHER.)

ESTHER.

O Rachel, is it you? Thrice happy day,
O blessed heaven, which sends you to my prayers.
You did not know that I was made the Queen?
More than six months my friends have sought for you.
Where have you been?

(*They sit centre.*)

RACHEL.

I heard that you were dead,
And hearing this, I lived most miserably,
Until a prophet told me, "Do not weep,
But rise, leave this, and take the Shushan road;
There you will see your Esther crowned the Queen.
And on your way comfort the wretched tribes;
Tell them the day approaches when our God
Will send His comfort with a powerful arm."
I heard his words, and hurried to the palace.
Marvellous it is that proud Ahasuerus
Has crowned his captive, made a *Jewess* Queen.
O by what hidden ways, what strange events,
Has Heaven led you to this great position?

ESTHER.

Have they not told you of the great disgrace
Of the proud Vashti, Queen before my coming?
The King divorced her, but when she was gone
His mind was troubled, and he sought for one
To bring him comfort.
They sought throughout the world in every land
To find a Queen.
I, as an orphan, lived alone and hidden
Under the care of watchful Mordecai:
He is my uncle, and he tended me.
Sad for the trouble of the captive Jews,
He told me all his secret plans, and I
Obeyed his wish, and sought to be the Queen.
Who could express the plots and counter-plots

Of all these courtiers, striving for the honour,
Striving to catch Ahasuerus' eyes.
At last Ahasuerus' order came to me,
And I appeared before the mighty King.
Long time he watched me in a sombre silence,
Then gently spoke: "You shall be Queen," he said,
And crowned me with his royal diadem.
Then followed days of joys and festivals;
Esther was Queen, and seated in the purple;
Half of the world was subject to her sceptre.
But grass is growing in Jerusalem,
The stones are scattered from the holy Temple,
The God of Israel's worship is no more.

RACHEL.

Have you not told the King your troubles, Esther?

ESTHER.

The King? Even now he knows not that I
am a Jewess,
For Mordecai keeps me secret still.

RACHEL.

Can Mordecai come about the Court?

ESTHER.

His love for me finds out a thousand ways
To send advice, and me to ask for it.
A Father has less care for his own son.
Already by good Mordecai's cunning
I have laid bare to the King the treacherous
plots
Made by two slaves against him.
Meanwhile my love for our beloved race
Has filled this palace with young Jewesses.
Here I can care for them and teach their
souls.
Among them, putting by my queenly pride,

I bow myself before the feet of God;
I hide from all the Persians who they are.
(*Calls.*) Come! Come, my daughters,
Companions here of my captivity.
(*Enter* CHORUS, *Left: bow slightly, and come down to front Left. They stand and speak standing.*)

RACHEL.

Innocent children, may God give you peace.

ESTHER.

My daughters, sing us one of those sweet psalms
That tell of Zion.

1ST CHORUS.

We cannot sing of Zion without tears.

2ND CHORUS.

How can we sing the happy songs of home
In this strange land?

1st Chorus.

All day and every day
The memory of old pleasure comes to us,
Old happy days at home with father and mother,
Our games and birthday feasts, and times at night
When lamps were lit.

Rachel.

It is too true; their hearts are breaking, Esther.
We exiled captives cannot sing of home.

Esther.

Sing of the war, and our captivity.

1st Chorus.

The fulness of our hearts is all we have,
We can sing that.

1st Chorus.

A myriad Persians came against our town,
Many in number as the blades of grass:

They broke the ramparts of the city down,
They robbed our Temple of its wealth of brass.

They made the captains of our soldiers yield,
They took our Kings and Princes captive there,
They blinded them, and killed them in the field,
They made us slaves: they gave us loads to bear.

Then, on a day, the Persian trumpets sounded;
They brought us from the city. Even as a beast
Bearing a too great burden, we were hounded
Far from our home away into the East.

And, looking back, even as we topped a rise,
We saw, far, far behind, our ruined city

Burning, a spoil to warriors without pity,
And we, the homeless slaves, the warriors' prize.

2ND CHORUS.

Now many a day has passed, and here as slaves
We toil, with breaking hearts, by tears made blind;
Thinking of our old homes, our fathers' graves,
Lost, like our chance of life, our peace of mind.

Now no foot falls in the houses of our fathers,
But the grass grows green and the fountain pipes are filled
With the ashes, and the ruin, and the burnt-out rafters,
And where once our Kings caroused the sparrows build.

(*Enter* MORDECAI, *Right. He comes down below* RACHEL. *He has his face hidden.*)

ESTHER.

What profane man dares come into this place?
O Mordecai! Uncle! Is it you?
An angel of the Lord has helped you here.
But why so sad?
Why are you wearing sackcloth
All strewn with ashes?

MORDECAI.

O wretched Queen!

(*He turns away from Queen.*)

O ghastly fortune of the innocent Jews!
Read, read the awful order that condemns us.
We are all lost, all ruined.

(RACHEL *down to* CHORUS *behind* ESTHER.)

ESTHER.

O Heaven! my blood is frozen in my veins!

MORDECAI.

They are about to massacre the Jews.
All of the Jewish nation is condemned.
Haman, the great King's favourite, plotted this;
The King, believing him, has signed the edict.
He gives his orders and in all his lands
To-morrow is appointed for our murder.

(*Alarm in* CHORUS.)

None of us will be spared, nor sex, nor age,
All of us will be killed and cast aside.
At the fifth hour to-morrow afternoon
The murder will begin.

ESTHER.

O Heaven who sees such plots,
Hast thou forgotten us?

RACHEL.

Heaven, who can guard us if thou dost not guard?

MORDECAI.

Now, Esther, leave all weeping to these children;
You are our only hope, and you must save us.
The time is short and all of us are doomed;
You must go forth and dare to tell the King
That you yourself are Jewish.

ESTHER.

Alas! you do not know what awful laws
Keep timid mortals from the awful King.
Death is the doom of any daring soul
Who comes before the King, not being bidden,
Unless the King think fit to stretch his sceptre
For him to kiss.
All living souls are subject to this law,
Even I, his Queen, am subject to this law.
If I his Queen desire to speak with him,

He must first call for me,
Or send for me.

MORDECAI.

What! when you see your country at death's door,
Is your own life so blessed to you, Esther?
Is not your life due to the Jewish race,
Or due to God Who gave it?
Who knows, if to the throne you bend your steps
To save the Jews, God may protect you there.
O happy you, to risk your life for God!
The God Who vanquishes the kings of earth,
At Whose great Voice the sea flies, the sky trembles.
If He permitted Haman's wicked plot,
Doubtless it was to prove your holy zeal.
O He will vanquish Haman, break our chains,
By the most weak hand in His universe

And you, if you do not accept this deed,
Will die with all your race.
(CHORUS *hands out in entreaty to* ESTHER.)

ESTHER.

If I accept the deed,
And if I see the King and live to tell him
That I am Jewish, he will surely kill me
For having kept it secret until now.

MORDECAI.

You could not have been Queen had it been known.
I bade you keep the secret for that reason;
Rightly, I judged it then.

ESTHER.

But it proves wrongly,
It ruins our last hope.

MORDECAI.

It is a hope,
Our only hope, and you must do it, Esther.

ESTHER.

O God, Thou seest the spears that ring us in!

RACHEL.

Esther, dear friend, for these sweet children's
sakes
Dare do this deed. Think, Esther; but for
you
Their tender limbs will pasture the wild
beasts,
And these most innocent lips that sing God's
praise
Be silenced, and our Zion desolate ever.
O I beseech you, hasten to the King!

THE CHORUS.

Save us, great Queen! Beseech the King to
save us!

ESTHER.

Go! let the Jews in Shushan pray for me,
And watch all night, and keep a solemn fast.

Now it is night; to-morrow at the dawn,
Contented well to die, if die I must,
I'll go, and offer me in sacrifice.

(*They veil.* MORDECAI *out here.*)

O sovereign Lord, kept here among the pagans,
Thou knowest how I loathe their heathen rites;
Thou knowest that this crown, which I must wear
In solemn feasts, I spurn beneath my feet
When I'm alone, preferring ashes to it.
O Lord, I waited for Thy word to come.
Now has the moment come, and I obey;
I go to dare to stand before the King.
It is for Thee I go; Lord, come with me,
To this fierce lion who knows not Thy law;
Grant that he be not angry, let me charm him;
Lord, turn his rage against our enemies.

(*During this speech* ESTHER *comes Right down to foot of stage.*)

1ST CHORUS.

Deliver us from this threatened death, O heaven;
Out of this body of death in which we dwell,
O Spirit, set us free.

2ND CHORUS.

For here, as slaves,
We cannot sing thy praise, we cannot keep
Thy laws, but live in dread and in despair.

RACHEL.

We had the past. We lived once, long ago.
We do not live now, save in memory.
Now even that little penny-weight of life
Is grudged us, is not spared, is taken from us.

ALL.

O lamentation, misery, woe, woe!

(RACHEL *a little at back of* CHORUS.)

CHORUS.

2ND CHORUS.

(*Spoken sitting.*)

In the troubled dreams a slave has ere I waken,
I can see my city shining as of old,
Roof and column of the Temple wreathed in gold;
And the ramparts proud as erst, before the town was taken,
And the well-loved living shapes that now are cold.
Then I wake, a slave, and houseless and forsaken,
Chained, an outcast, and a chattel, bought and sold.

1ST CHORUS.

(*Sitting.*)

Now, for us, no future, but the corn-mill and the stranger

In the foeman's house forever.
And the cold eyes of a master and the cruel
eyes of danger,
And the memory of joys returning never.

We who once were dainty ones and splendid,
Now are slaves who grind the mill be-
neath a master's blow;
Would that when our fathers ended, we had
ended,
That we lay in Zion's soil, at peace with
those.

ALL.

O lamentation, misery, woe, woe!

1ST *and* 2ND CHORUS.

(*Together, standing.*)

Here, from our prison gate, we see again
The never-ending sand, the Persian plain,
The long, long road, the stones that we should
tread

Were we but free, to our beloved dead.

And in the Spring the birds fly to the west
Over those deserts that the mountains hem,
They fly to our dear land; they fly to nest;
We cannot go with them.

1st Chorus.
(*Standing.*)

And in Springtime from the windows of the tower
I can see the wild horses in the plain,
Treading stately but so lightly that they never break the flower,
And they fade at speed to westward and they never come again.

2nd Chorus.
(*Standing.*)

And in Springtime at the quays the men of Tyre

Set their ships towards the west and hoist
their sail,
And our hearts cry "Take us with you to the
land of our desire!"
And they hear our cry but will not take the
crier:
The crying of a slave can be of no avail.

TOGETHER.

(*Move at "Birds."*)

Birds, horses, sailors, all are free to go
To seek their homes beyond the wilderness;
But we, the homeless, only know

(1ST CHORUS *comes across Right below* ESTHER. 2ND CHORUS *comes L., kneels at foot of* ESTHER *Centre.*)

Weariful days of wearing-out distress.
O lamentation, misery, woe, woe!

ESTHER, RACHEL AND THE REST.

(*Speaking in a group in Centre.*)

Shall we be ever exiled, must it be
That we must pass our days as slaves forever?
Far from our pleasant land, and never see
Our sacred Hills and Jordan's blessed river.
Shall we not see again thy ramparts rise,
O Zion, and thy splendid towers rebuilt,
And God's great Temple set for sacrifice
By this our race, atoning for our guilt?
Or must our weary footsteps no more tread
The land we love, where those we loved are dead?

No, we shall see that lovely land no more
Nor anything we loved there, place or friend,
Nor do, nor know, the things we hungered for.

Like darts out of God's Hand our deaths descend
To make an end.

Now we can crouch and pray and count the hours
Until our murderers' feet are on the stair,
And bright steel spirits the blood upon our hair
And lays us motionless among the flowers,
White things that do not care.

And afterwards, who knows what moths we'll be
Flying about the lamps of life at night
In death's great darkness, blindly, blunderingly.

The brook that sings i' the grass knows more delight,

The ox that the men pole-axe has more
peace
Than prisoners' souls; but now there comes
release—
We shall go home, to death, to-morrow night.

O lamentation, misery, woe, woe!

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

AHASUERUS.

(AHASUERUS *on his couch.*)

What is the time? I hear the water drip
Telling the time; and all the Court is still,
Still as the midnight; not a footstep stirs
Save the slow sentry on the palace wall.
No glow of light is in the eastern heaven;
The barren, dwindled moon her ruddy horn
Heaves o'er the tree-tops; it is midnight, sure.
I see Orion falling, and the Dog
Bright at his heels. Deep midnight. Not a sound
Save the most patient mouse that gnaws the wainscot.

(*He rises and walks.*)

O weary Time, I cannot sleep to-night.

All still, all sleep, save only I the King,
And that great city at the palace foot
Lies sleeping; yet a strange fear troubles me
That some there do not sleep, but prepare evil—
Evil against myself, against the King.
Those foreigners whom Haman told me of,
The Jews, who are to die, as Haman urged.
Excellent Haman, guardian of my throne.

It may be that his warning comes too late.
What if those Jews be coming even now
By the black alleys of that sleeping city
Into my palace, up the guarded stairs
From floor to floor, along the corridors,
Stealthily, with masked eyes, with bated breath,
On tiptoe to the threshold of my room.

That captain of my guard has eyed me strangely

These two nights now; he had an evil look.
He smiled, but still, his eyes: they did not
smile.

Where is my sword? It's here. Look at that
door.
It moved. Was that the wind? Who stands
without?
I see you standing there. Come in there, you.
Who is it?

GUARD.

(*Off.*)

The great King's guard is here.
God save the King! And may he live forever!

AHASUERUS.

(*Going right back.*)

Give me a cup of drink. I thirst. I thank
you.
You men were sleeping when I called for you.
Sing, that I know you watching till I sleep.

(*The* SOLDIERS *hum and sing together.* AHASUERUS *settles to his sleep again. Count 20 slowly. Stop singing gradually. He rouses up and walks again.*)

There is a something evil in this room;
I seem to give it power by lying down.
It is as though the dark were full of souls
That wait till I am helpless and then come
Out of the corners, out of the air itself,
About my body; but, being up, they fly.

See, there is nothing here. I pass my hand—
(*He goes round Right and Back feeling the walls.*)
Here, here and here. I do not like that corner:
Is the thing there? The shadow on the wall
Is like the black head of an African
Thrown back in mockery, and it seems to move—

To move a little forward. It is but shadow.

(*At Left Back.*)

Yes, you are only shadow on the wall,
Not what you thought.

(*He comes down stage.*)

And yet I know this room
Is living with the spirits of evil things;
Spirits of evil things that I have done.
It is so difficult to be a King,
To wear the crown and to be ringed with death;
To order "Thus" with little time to think,
No time to know, but to be just, far-seeing,
Wise, generous, strict and yet most merciful,
As though one knew.

Now one by one they come,
Those plotters who defied me, whom I killed,
Crucified, burned, impaled, or tore with horses,

Men who with white lips cursed me, going to death.

(*He turns facing Left.*)

Yes, you pale ghosts, I mastered you in life,
And will in death. I hold an Empire up,
A thing that IS; no glimmering dream of boys
Of what might be, but will not till men change;
No phantom Paradise of vengeance glutted
By poor men upon rich men, but a world
Rising and doing its work and lying down
Because my fierceness keeps the wolves at bay.
And yet, those Jews, even at my palace door,
So Haman said, have had my death contrived.
What if that captain be in league with them?
Guard! Is Hydaspes there?

GUARD.

He is here, great King. Hydaspes, the King calls.

(HYDASPES *enters Left.*)

HYDASPES.

Lord! Do you call?

AHASUERUS.

Come in. Let fall the hanging. Come you there,
Into the moonlight, that I see your face.

(HYDASPES *comes down Left.*)

Let me be sure that no one crawls behind you.
Hold out your hands, so; let me see the fingers.
Stay there. No nearer.
You have travelled far?

HYDASPES.

I have been far, among the Indian lands.

AHASUERUS.

And saw strange peoples?

HYDASPES.

Some.

AHASUERUS.

Which were the strangest?

HYDASPES.

Those of Tibet, who made their pence of gold,
And reckoned costly things by cups of water.

AHASUERUS.

Who next seemed strange to you?

HYDASPES.

The Tartar horsemen
Who live on cheese of mare's milk, and go on
For ever over never-ending grass,
And have no home except the black felt tent
And the great plain and the great sky and
silence.

AHASUERUS.

A good life, that, for men. Who, next to
those?

HYDASPES.

The race of Sittras by the sacred river;
They are all men, grown grey; no women
there.
They have put by their wives and families,
Their crowns, their swords, their households
and their cares,
And seek for wisdom there, until they die.

AHASUERUS.

Do they find wisdom?

HYDASPES.

No, but they find peace.

AHASUERUS.

Do they, by Heaven; as a dead man does.
Wisdom is life upon the tickle edge.
Not the blind staring of the stupefied

At nothing out of nothing. I envy you
For travelling thus and seeing all these things,
Which I shall only hear of.
Tell me now,
When you were wandering, did you meet the Jews?

HYDASPES.

No, never, Lord.

AHASUERUS.

Nor heard about their race?

HYDASPES.

Not in the East.

AHASUERUS.

But in the West you have?

HYDASPES.

Yes, here at home.

AHASUERUS.

What have you heard?

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HYDASPES.

That they are heathen men,
Brought from beyond the desert in the wars;
Not desert savages, nor civilised,
But enemies of both.

AHASUERUS.

Who told you this?

HYDASPES.

Prince Haman told me.

AHASUERUS.

They are now condemned;
They have been plotting here. You do not know
Any of their rebellious stock, by chance?

HYDASPES.

No, Lord, not one.

AHASUERUS.

Go to that door, Hydaspes.
Is someone listening to us, as we speak?

HYDASPES.

(*Going to door Left.*)

No, Lord; the guard is at the door beyond.

AHASUERUS.

Come nearer me. That captain of the guard,
Is he a Jew?

HYDASPES.

No, Lord, a Persian, surely,
Pordanatha, from lovely Arisai,
The city white like snow; Persian as you.

AHASUERUS.

Thank you, Hydaspes.
These times are dangerous. Go now from here,
See the guards doubled at Queen Esther's doors.
These Jews are secret like that desert tribe
Whom none has seen, who walk the moonless night

And strike men dead, and go, and leave no trace
Save the dead body.

HYDASPES.

I will place the guards
Myself, great King.

(*Exit* HYDASPES, *Left.*)

AHASUERUS.

Esther, the Queen, not yet a trusted Queen.
Not lightly can an Emperor put his trust
In man or woman. She is proud, and pride
Is slow to give or take in confidence.
How the Queen Vashti comes into my mind!
She disobeyed my order at the feast,
So she is put away, and lives in exile.
How little quiet have I known since then!
Plot, plot and counter-plot, and none to comfort,
Nor to advise, as Vashti used to do.

Was it a plot that made her disobey?
I sent Prince Memucan to bring her to me:
He brought back word that she refused to
come.
How if Prince Memucan were lying to me?
Misquoting what she said, to make me rage
And put her from her place beside my
throne?
For since she went, Prince Memucan has
been
About me day and night, and grows in power.
Who are the comrades of Prince Memucan?
Meres, Adathan; but his chiefest friend
Is Haman, my most trusted councillor.
Haman, my friend, to whom I love to give
Princedoms and palaces and silver mines.
And yet, what if the two conspired together
To rid me of the Queen, that they might rule
me?
I will send Memucan beyond the seas

Upon some dangerous mission of great honour:
He shall away to-morrow in all haste.
But Haman I can trust.

(*He tries to compose himself to sleep.*)

Princedoms, and palaces, and silver mines,
Pomps, glories, splendours, princedoms, palaces,—
Vashti the Queen, and enemies, and princedoms—
A long, long life, and heavy hours of time!

(*He sleeps.*)

(*A clink of metal to mark passage of time. Strike a bell or metal plate thrice. Count 20 slowly.*)

AHASUERUS.

(*Starting up.*)

It was not I,
It was the slave Harbonah poisoned him,

Not I. I was not there. I never knew.
Horrible white face with the blotch of death;
Harbonah gave it in the honey cake—
The honey cake, I never gave it you.
I was not at the feast, it is well known
I was most sick that night.

(*He wakes.*)

Merach! Merach! begone! It was not
Merach,
But someone at the footing of the bed.
Someone, a Jew, with bones instead of face
And blood that dripped.

(*He gropes at foot of bed.*)

(*He rises.*)

O blessed night, so full of peace, so calm,
After that horror.
Ah! I know it now,
What the Chaldean told me long ago,
That I should know no quiet rest at night,

Being a King, unless I ate of bread
Baked in a house where sorrow never came.
O blessed bread, would I could eat of thee!
(*Goes back.*)
Guards! are the gates secure?

GUARD.
(*Off.*)
God save the King!
The King's gates are made sure, and the gates' keys
Here, under guard. May the King live for ever!
(AHASUERUS *comes down Centre, then halfway back to* GUARD.)

AHASUERUS.
The sentries on the walls; do they report
All quiet in the city?

GUARD.
All, great King.

AHASUERUS.

No armed men moving, no suspicious thing?

GUARD.

Nothing, O Son of Heaven, but silent darkness,
And here and there a priest of the great sun
Praying long life and blessing on our Monarch.

AHASUERUS.

(*Coming down.*)

Long life, long misery!

(*Count 10 slowly.*)

It is within this room the horror is—
That thing, that Jew, that thing out of the grave.

No, nothing, nothing! I can see there's nothing.
So—I will sleep. I will repeat that song
Made long ago by one who could not sleep,

To help his fellow-sufferers.

(*Repeats.*)

Along the beach a wave comes slowly in,
And breaks, and dies away, and dies away;
The moon is dimmed and all the ropes
are taut.
Along the beach a wave comes slowly in,
And breaks and dies away, and dies away.
It is no season, sailor, to quit port.
Along—etc.

(*He sleeps.*)

(*Count 10 slowly. Enter* GHOST OF THARES, *Right. The* GHOST *comes behind* AHASUERUS *and across stage to Left Centre. It stands still and hinnies like a snipe.*)

AHASUERUS.

(*In his sleep.*)

O no! Spare me! Spare me!
Loose me my hands. O they have tied my feet!

I cannot get from bed, and now they come.
Merciful Gods! my thigh-bones are both
broken.
I cannot stir. Who is it gibbering there?
The blood is on the bed-clothes wetting me.
Who are you? Who?

THARES.

(*In a disguised, piping voice.*)

The shadow of what I was.
Come for your blood.

AHASUERUS.

I'll give you gold—my kingdom—
But let me go!

THARES.

(*Creeping slowly across, hands out.*)

I cannot, Ahasuerus.
I want your life, the soul out of your body.
See, I come nearer and a little nearer,
A little nearer still, and put out hands—

Lean, skinny hands, that used to serve your
food,
Thin hands to put your powerless hands
aside
And take you by the throat as now I do,
And squeeze, and squeeze the life out of your
flesh!

(*He begins to strangle* AHASUERUS.)

AHASUERUS.

(*With effort.*)

Ah, gods! He kills me! Kills me!
Out, O gods!
Hydaspes! Help!
Hydaspes! Guards! Hydaspes!

(*Exit* THARES, *L.*)

HYDASPES.

(*R.*)

Lord!

AHASUERUS.

The villain strangled me. It was a dream.
A dreadful dream! And yet I knew his face.
Who was the man? One who made plots
against me,
And died, from torture, as a due reward.
Who was the man?
Go, bring the records here,
The wise Chaldeans and the record-writers,
And let them read the records, for I know
The man's name will be there.

(*Exit* HYDASPES, *Left.*)

It was his spirit.
An evil thing, a harbinger of evil,
A plotter coming as the vulture comes
Before the corpse. But the Chaldean scribes
Will know his name, and by their magicry
Tell me what evil comes.
Thares it was—
Thares, the man was, who was put to death

For plotting with the other, Bigdana.

(*Goes back.*)

Let pass the wise Chaldeans when they come.

THE GUARD.

(*Off.*)

God save the King! May the King live for ever!

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE:—*The Throne Room of* AHASUERUS.
Throne Settle.

(HYDASPES *discovered.* HAMAN *enters Left.*)

HAMAN.

Why do you bring me to this fearful place
Even before the dawn?

HYDASPES.

You trust to me:
Anywhere else we might be overheard.

HAMAN.

What is the secret that you wish to tell me?

HYDASPES.

Lord, I know well that I have sworn to you
To tell you all the secrets of the palace.
The King is overwhelmed in utter gloom.

During this night a ghastly dream has scared
him;
In the calm silence of the night he shrieked;
I hurried in; I found him babbling wildly,
Talking of peril threatening him with death,
Of enemies, of evil, and of Esther.
And in these horrors did he pass the night;
Then, weary from the sleep which fled from
him,
He tried to clear his spirit of the horror
And bade men bring him in the written rec-
ords,
Telling of all his glory, and his reign.
There in his bed he rests while these are read.

HAMAN.

What portion of his reign is being read?

HYDASPES.

All of his glorious time since he was King.

HAMAN.

Has he forgotten now his ghastly dream?

HYDASPES.

He has assembled all his great magicians
Who read the will of Heaven in darksome dreams.
But you yourself seem troubled as by dreams;
You seem dismayed; have you some secret trouble?

(HAMAN *turns.*)

HAMAN.

Can you ask that, and see my situation?
Hated, feared, envied by the men I crush.

(*Folds arms.*)

HYDASPES.

Ah, upon whom has Heaven smiled more gently?
You see the whole world prostrate at your feet.

HAMAN.

The whole world? Every day a filthy slave,
With brazen brow, disdains and injures me.

HYDASPES.

Who is this enemy of State and King?

HAMAN.

You know, perhaps, the name of Mordecai?

HYDASPES.

Chief of an impious and rebellious race?

HAMAN.

Yes, he.

HYDASPES.

Lord, can so weak a foeman trouble you?

HAMAN.

The insolent scoundrel never bows to me.
When all the Persians bow with holy awe
And dare not raise their foreheads from the earth,
He, proudly seated, with unbended head,

Treats all my honour as impiety
And looks at me with a seditious brow;
And day and night he haunts the palace door.
Always, when I go out or enter in,
His hateful face afflicts me and pursues me,
And all night long my troubled spirit sees
him.
(*Right down stage.*)
This morning I, though up before the dawn,
Found him before me, smeared with filthy
dust,
Dressed all in rags, all pale; but still his eye
Kept underneath the ashes the same pride.
Dear friend, how does he dare this brazen
boldness?
You, who see all that passes in the palace,
Do you believe that friends encourage him?
What backing has he?

HYDASPES.

My Lord, you know that it was he discovered

That bloody plot of Thares to the King.
The King then promised to reward him well,
Though since that time he has forgotten it.

HAMAN.

I as a young child came among the Persians;
I govern now where I was made a slave;
My wealth is equal to the wealth of kings,
Only my forehead wants the royal crown.
(*Crosses to Right in front of* HYDASPES.)
Yet all my honour is but little to me
While Mordecai at the palace entrance
Tortures my spirit with a thousand daggers,
And all my grandeur seems to me as none
While that vile slave is lighted by the sun.

HYDASPES.

(*Moves down to Left.*)

You will be rid of him in ten hours' time;
The whole Jew race is promised to the
vultures.

HAMAN.

Ah! 'tis a long, long time to my impatience.

(*Sits on throne.*)

Listen, I'll tell the story of my vengeance.
It was through him, who would not bow to me,
That I have caused this sentence that destroys them—
Vengeance too little for a man so foul.
For when one dares affront a man like Haman,
The following vengeance cannot be too great.
One must have vengeance
Such as will make the universe to tremble,
So that the whole Jew race be drowned in blood.
I wish that some day in the startled centuries
A man shall say: "Yes, once there were the Jews,

An insolent race that covered all the world;
But one of them dares stir the wrath of Haman:
Immediately they disappeared from earth."

HYDASPES.

Lord, is it your Amalekitish blood
That secretly excites you to destroy them?

HAMAN.

I know the bloody feud there was of old
Between the Jews and the Amalekites;
But I am so attached to worldly greatness,
I do not feel this racial prejudice.
Mordecai is guilty, that suffices;
And so I stirred Ahasuerus' mind;
(*Change of voice to venom.*)
I told him lies, invented calumnies,
Touched him with fear, and left him terrified;
Told him the Jews were arming,
Rich, seditious,

Their very God hateful to other gods.
I told the King "These strangers only hope
To wreck the peace in which we find ourselves.
Strike them," I said, "before they strike at you
And fill your treasure-houses with their booty."
I told him, he believed me, and at once
The King gave me the seal of Royal Power.
"Save me," he said, "protect our royal peace,
Ruin those scoundrels and their wealth is yours."
All of the Jewish race was thus condemned,
I and the King arranged the day of slaughter.
But to await ten hours that traitor's death
Is too much anguish to my aching heart.
Something, I know not what, poisons my joy:
Why must I see that scoundrel ten hours more?

HYDASPES.

Can you not have him killed with but one word?
Lord, ask the King to give him up to you.

HAMAN.

That's why I am here, seeking a fitting moment.
You know as well as I this pitiless Prince,
How terrible his sudden rage can be;
Often he breaks the network of our plans.
(*Pause.*)
My fear too subtly works to torture me;
The Jew to him must be too vile a soul.

HYDASPES.

O why delay? Go, build the gallows for him.

HAMAN.

There's noise—I go. If the King calls for me—

HYDASPES.

Enough.

(*They go off Left to wings.*)

(*Enter* AHASUERUS *and* ASAPH.)

AHASUERUS.

So then, without this faithful information,
Two traitors would have killed their King in bed.
Let people leave me;

(*Exit of* HYDASPES *and* HAMAN.)

Asaph, stay with me.

(ASAPH *behind* KING. KING *sits on throne.*)

I must confess I had forgotten them,
Almost forgotten their most bloody crime;
And now this reading brings it back to me,
I see again the end their crime achieved
And how by torments they were put to death.
Now, of that faithful subject, whose quick eye
Unravelled all the thread of their black plot

Through whom, in fact, Persia and I were saved,
What honour, what rewards were given to him?

ASAPH.

They promised much, and that is all I know.

AHASUERUS.

Wicked forgetfulness of such great service,
Certain effect of my too busy life.
A Prince is ever weighed with busy cares,
Dragged on unendingly from thing to thing;
The future troubles him, the present strikes him,
But swifter than the light the past escapes him.
Ah, rather let the crime escape by vengeance
Than such rare service lose its right reward.
That man who showed such noble zeal for me—
Is he alive?

ASAPH.

He sees the star that lights you.

AHASUERUS.

Why has he not demanded his reward?
What distant country hides him from my love?

ASAPH.

Lord, uncomplaining of yourself and fate,
He drags his life out at your palace doors.

AHASUERUS.

What is his name?

ASAPH.

His name is Mordecai.

AHASUERUS.

What is his country?

ASAPH.

Lord, since I have to tell you,
He is a captive Jew, condemned to death.

AHASUERUS.

He is a Jew? O Heaven, when my life
Was threatened to be taken by my subjects,
A Jew protects me from my subjects' swords;
A Jew has saved me from the Persians' vengeance!
But since he saved me, be he what he may—
Here! someone! (*Calls.*)

(*Enter* HYDASPES, *Left.*)

HYDASPES.

Lord?

AHASUERUS.

Look by that door,
See if some noble of my Court is there.

HYDASPES.

Haman is at your door, since before dawn.

AHASUERUS.

Let him come in, he may enlighten me.

(HYDASPES *bows and exit.*)

(*Enter* HAMAN, *Left.*)

Hail, happy standfast of thy master's throne,
Soul of my counsel, who so many times
Has lightened in my hand my heavy sceptre.
A dark reproach embarrasses my soul.
I know how pure a zeal inflames your heart,
I know no lying ever stains your lips,
I know my interest only is your thought,
So tell me,

What ought a very mighty prince to do
To honour any subject whom he loves?
By what great glory worthy of a King
Can I reward a man of faith and merit?
Put not a limit on my condescension,
Think of my power ere you answer me.

HAMAN.

(*Aside.*)

Haman, it is for you yourself you speak;
(*Comes down stage and speaks to audience.*)
What other subject could he wish to honour?

AHASUERUS.

What do you think?

HAMAN.

O King, I think of all the Persian Kings,
Remembering what they did on such occasions
But bring them back in vain into my mind.
(*He begins to move back, so that five lines from this he is slightly behind* AHASUERUS.)
How should their deeds make precedents for you?
For what are they when put beside yourself?
Your reign will serve as model to all time.
You wish then to reward some faithful subject?
Honour alone rewards a noble mind.
(HAMAN *gets behind to Left of* AHASUERUS.)
Lord, I should wish that he, that happy mortal,

Should, like yourself, be decked to-day in
purple,
And wear a sacred crown upon his brow,
And go through Shushan with the world to see,
Riding upon your war-horse gloriously.
And as a crown to this magnificence,

(*During these lines he comes forward down stage, and, though speaking to* AHASUERUS, *is carried away by his own eloquence.*)

Let some great Lord, magnificent in power,
The next man in the Empire to yourself,
Lead the proud war-horse by the bridle rein;
And let the proud Lord in his courtly dress,
Cry with a high voice in the public places:
"Mortals, prostrate yourselves, 'tis thus the
King
Crowns faith and honours merit."

(*Pause.*)

AHASUERUS.

I see that wisdom's self inspires you,
In every point your judgment backs my will.
Go, lose no time; what you have said to me
I wish in every point to be made good.
Virtue no longer shall be hidden here.
Go then, O Haman, to the palace gates.

(*Pause.* HAMAN *shows joy.*)

There you will find the poor Jew Mordecai—

(*Pause.* HAMAN *shows more joy.*)

He is the man whom I desire to honour.
Order his triumph, march before him, you;
Let your voice ring through Shushan with his name,
Let every knee bend whereso'er he comes.
Now leave me, all.

HAMAN.

(*Aside.*)

Gods!

(*Exit* HAMAN.)

AHASUERUS.

Never has subject gloried in such honour,
But yet I show how deeply I can fear
To be ungrateful;
And the world will see
The innocent distinguished from the guilty.
Yet all the same, that loathsome race of Jews—

(ESTHER, RACHEL *and* CHORUS *enter Left, crouching.*)

What insolent mortal comes to look for death,
Entering without my orders?
Guards! Guards! What, Esther, you?
You here and unexpected!

ESTHER.

(*Swooning.*)

O children, hold your Queen!

(RACHEL *on* ESTHER'S *left, and* 1ST *and* 2ND CHORUS *support her.*)

I die!

AHASUERUS.

No, Esther, what do you fear?
No; do not think
I made this bitter order against you.
Live, for you see I stretch my golden sceptre
Towards you, as a witness of my pardon.

ESTHER.

What friendly voice commands that I should live?

AHASUERUS.

Do you not recognize your husband's voice?

ESTHER.

Lord, I have never witnessed save with fear
The majesty upon your kingly brow;
Judge then the terror in my troubled soul
To see that brow in anger against me.
What daring heart could see without a shudder,
Or bear the light that glitters from your eyes
Like the bright anger of the Living God!

AHASUERUS.

O sun! O fires of immortal light!
I too am troubled and can hardly bear
To see, as now, her terror and dismay.
O Queen, put by the terror that o'erwhelms you,
You are the mistress of my kingly heart.
Come, test my friendship for you. What you will—
What will you have? The half of my possessions?

ESTHER.

And can a King, obeyed by the whole world,
(*Kneeling.*)
Before whom all must bow and kiss the dust,
Look with such kindness on his meanest slave?

AHASUERUS.

This sceptre, and this Empire, and this terror,

And these profound respects, and all this pomp,
Bring little sweetness to me and fatigue me,
Believe me, Esther. But I find in you
A grace that charms me and that never tires,
Nothing but innocence, and peace, and beauty,
That drives the darkness of my troubles from me
And makes less fearful all the rage of foes.
Therefore, without this terror, answer me:
Tell me what thrilling business brings you here,
What care, what trouble, makes you shudder thus?
Speak; you have but to ask, to have your will,
If aught you wish is in a mortal's giving.

ESTHER.

O goodness of my King!
Indeed a thrilling business brings me here.

Here I await my happiness or death;
All, mighty King, depends upon your will;
One word from you may end my agony
And make me happiest of the queens on earth.

AHASUERUS.

Speak! You inflame my wish to hear your trouble.

ESTHER.

Lord, if I found a favour in your eyes,

(*On her knees.*)

If ever you consented to my prayers,
Grant before all that I this day receive you,
My lord and sovereign, at a solemn feast,
And grant that Haman be invited thither;
For before him I'll dare to break my silence
And also tell why I demand his presence.

(CHORUS *stand.*)

AHASUERUS.

Esther, you trouble me; yet, be it so.
Let all be done as you desire it.

(*Order to* GUARD.)

You!—Seek for Haman; let him understand
He is invited by the Queen to feast.

(*Exit* GUARD, *Left.*)

(*Enter* HYDASPES, *Right. Comes down below* KING.)

HYDASPES.

The wise Chaldeans are assembled here,
According to your order.

AHASUERUS.

Princess, a strange dream occupies my thought;
The answer of the wise men affects you.
Come! you shall hear them from behind a curtain,
And afterwards shall give me your advice.
I fear some treacherous enemy plots against us.
Follow me, Esther.

ESTHER.

You, my gentle friends,
Wait here till I return.

(AHASUERUS *and* ESTHER *go off, Right.*)

(RACHEL *crosses Right, then turns and speaks. As she speaks the* CHORUS *come down the stage.*)

RACHEL.

What do you think, my sisters, of our fortunes?
Which do you think will triumph,
Esther or Haman?
Will God's will, or will man's will triumph here?

CHORUS.

We cannot tell. We know that God's great Hand
Is heavy on the race of Jews this day.

CHORUS.

It is because of sin, because of blood,
Blood of just men, shed in iniquity,

That we, the lost, are trampled to the mud
And are condemned to die in slavery.

Soon, when the evening comes, our foes will seek
All of our race. Their bloody swords will slay
Men, women, children, all, the strong and weak,
And heap our mangled bodies by the way,
To know no burial.

(*Kneel here.*)

Lord, if we search our ways and turn again,
Surely Thou wilt forgive, and Thou wilt send
Help, like an army, mercy like the rain,
And save us from destruction at the end.
Save us, O save us!

The doom is cast, our murderers draw the
sword,
None can avert our death but Thou, O Lord!

Without, our murderers hasten even now.
We are as dead, and none can save but Thou.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

In Front of Curtain, on a platform or avant-scène, (HAMAN, ZERESH.)

ZERESH.

Here, by the still shut gate of Esther's hall,
Hark to your wife; by all that you hold sacred,
My Lord, hide your blind rage against the Jews,
Make bright that forehead shadowed now with sadness:
Kings fear reproach, and sadness
You, chosen by the Queen, the one guest asked,
Show that you feel that proud felicity,
Show that you feel it, even through any evil.
I have a hundred times been told by you

That he who cannot stomach an affront
Nor hide his proper feelings with false colours,
Should fly from Courts and Kings.
All men have disappointments: often, too,
An outrage bravely borne, endured with prudence,
Has led a man even to the highest honours.

HAMAN.

Misery! misery, frightful to my thought!
O shame that never can be wiped away!
A loathsome Jew, the foulest of his kind,
Has now been clad in purple by these hands.
It's not enough that he should conquer me,
That I have served as herald to his glory,
While he, the traitor, mocked at my confusion;
And all the people mocking after him,
Seeing the blushes covering my face,

Mocked me and muttered of my certain fall.
O cruel King! And this has been your pleasure!
You only gave me honours in the past
To make me feel your tyranny the better
And drive me deeper still in ignominy.

ZERESH.

Why judge so harshly of the King's intention?
He thinks that he rewards a generous deed.
Ought one not rather to be much astonished
That he so long has left it unrewarded?
He has done nothing but by your advice,
And you yourself dictated all the ceremony.
In all the Empire you are next to him;
Say, does he know how much you loathe the Jew?

HAMAN.

The King knows well how much he owes to me;

The King knows well how I, to make him great,
Have stamped remorse, fear, shame, beneath my feet,
And used his power with a heart of brass,
Silenced the laws, made innocent people sob,
Only for him contemned the Persians' hatred,
Cherished and sought the curses of the people.
And for reward, the barbarous King to-day
Exposed me to their mocking and their hatred.

ZERESH.

My Lord, let me speak plain. That zeal you show,
That zeal of bending all things to his power,
Had it a purer object than yourself?
Take without going further this one case:
Of all the ruined Jews made desolate,
Surely you ruined them to please yourself!

Can you not rightly fear that even now
The people loathe us, and the Court detests
us?

(HAMAN *turns away.*)

Lord, I *must* speak. My Lord, this Jew—
this Jew
Heaped now with honours, frightens me.
Misfortunes often follow on each other,
The Jewish race always brought death to
yours.
Take now this morning's trouble as an omen:
Perhaps your fortune is about to leave you;
Fortune is fickle. Act before she leaves you.

(*She touches him.*)

My lord, what more ambition can you have?
I shudder when I see the way you take.
(*He turns slightly to her. He is below her.*)
The deep abysses opening before me.
Nought but a horrible fall before our feet.
Lord, let us fly,

(*Here she holds him by the shoulder.*)

And seek some calmer fate,
Fly to the Hellespont and those far shores
Where in old time your wandering fathers were.
Let us away, away from fortune's malice!
Send on our richest treasures ere we start;
Leave me to manage; I will take the children,—
Have no more care except to hide yourself,
For the most terrible and stormy sea
Is safer to us than this treacherous Court.
But someone hurriedly is coming here!

(*Enter* HYDASPES *from below, in front, Left.*)

HYDASPES.

My Lord, I came to seek you:
Your absence takes away the general joy,
Ahasuerus bids me bring you to him.

HAMAN.

Is Mordecai also at this feast?

HYDASPES.

Why do you let this image of the Jew
Torment you even as a royal guest?
Let the Jew glory in his petty triumph,
Can he avoid the fury of the King?
You rule Ahasuerus heart and soul;
The Jew has been rewarded, but next time
Will be beheaded.
We have but garlanded your victim for you.
And I suspect that you, when backed by
Esther,
Will come to even greater honours here.

HAMAN.

O could I but believe your joyful news!

HYDASPES.

I heard the answers of the wise Chaldeans.
They say a treacherous stranger plots and
plans
To kill the Queen.

The King, who does not know this guilty traitor,
Thinks that the plan is plotted by the Jews.

HAMAN.

Dear friend, the Jews are truly but wild beasts;
One must above all fear their daring Chief.
Earth has too long endured the horror of them,
Nature cannot be too soon rid of them.
So now I breathe again.
Good-bye, dear Zeresh!

HYDASPES.

Enter, receive the honour ready for you.
(*Curtain rises and discovers* AHASUERUS, ESTHER. HAMAN *entering.*)

AHASUERUS.

(*To* ESTHER *at his right.*)

Ah! Your last speeches have a secret grace;

All that you do displays a noble mind
Beyond all price, beyond all gold or purple.
What virtuous country bore so rare a treasure?
What wisdom reared you in your infancy?
But tell me what it is you want from me,
For all your wishes, Esther, shall be granted,
Even to the half of this my powerful Empire.
This that I promised once, I now repeat.

ESTHER.

No such great wishes, Lord: but this I long for,
Since even my King himself has bid me speak.
(*She flings herself at his feet.*)
I dare beseech you both for my own life
And the salvation of a wretched people
That you have now condemned to die with me.

AHASUERUS.

(*Raising her.*)

To die? And you?

What people? What is this?

HAMAN.

(*Aside.*)

I tremble!

ESTHER.

Esther, my Lord, her father was a Jew.

You know the harshness of your cruel orders.

HAMAN.

(*Aside.*)

Ah, gods!

AHASUERUS.

Ah! what a blow! you pierce me to the heart.

You, daughter of a Jew?

You whom I love!

Goodness and innocence their very selves!

Esther, whom I believed did come from Heaven,

Is after all born from this impure stock!
Unhappy King!

ESTHER.

You can reject my prayer,
But I demand at least for a last grace
That you should hear me speak, Lord, to the end,
And above all, let Haman check me not.

AHASUERUS.

Speak!

ESTHER.

O God, confound daring and knavery!
These Jews of whom you mean to rid the world,
Whom you believe the outcasts of mankind,
Were sovereigns in a happy land of old
While they were faithful to their fathers' God:
God, only Master of the earth and skies,
The Eternal One, the Maker of the world,

Who hears the sighing of the tortured poor.
There came a day the Jews neglected Him,
They dared raise altars unto other gods,
And in a day kings, peoples, all were scattered,
And their Assyrian captivity
Became the just reward of their unfaith.
The time went by, and after many years
The captive Jews enjoyed a happier lot.
You became King, you, friend of innocence,
Whose mercy all declared with cries of joy.
But cruel minds surround the gentlest princes
And poison even the gentlest mind with lies;
And here a ruffian from the depths of Thrace
Comes to encourage cruelty in you;
A statesman, hating you and all your glory.

HAMAN.

Your glory? I? Can you believe it, Heaven?
I, with no other aim, no other god!

AHASUERUS.

Silence!
Do you dare speak before the King commands?

ESTHER.

You see our cruel enemy before you;
'Tis he, this faithless and barbarian statesman,
Who with malignant zeal blinding your eyes,
Has armed your strength against our innocence.
Who but a pitiless Scythian would have dared
Dictate an order of such frightful horror
And give a signal through the startled world
To fill the globe with murders?
Who but he?
Under your name, most just of Emperors,
This faithless stranger desolates your country;
Even in this palace will his bloody rage

Spill your good subjects' blood.
What have the Jews done to provoke his hate?
What civil quarrel have we helped to spread?
When have the Jews marched with your enemies?
Were ever slaves more passive to the yoke,
Worshipping in their chains the God Who gives them.
Lord, while your hand lay heaviest upon them,
They prayed their God to be a guard to you,
To break the plots the wicked made against you
And take your throne in the shadow of His wings.
And doubt not, Lord, God was your help and stay,
Beat down the Parthians and the Indians for you,

Scattered before you all the Scythian hordes
And to the eyes of one poor Jew discovered
The plans of men who plotted to destroy
you.
I am that same poor Jew's adopted daughter.

AHASUERUS.

Mordecai?

ESTHER.

He was the sole survivor of our household.
My father was his brother. He, like me,
Is in direct descent from our first King.
Full of just horror for an Amalekite,
A race accursed by the lips of God,
He would not bow the knee to Haman here,
Nor give him honours only due to you.
From this, my Lord, hidden under other
names,
Proceeds his hatred against all the Jews.
In vain you gave rewards to Mordecai,

Already at the very door of Haman
Behold the gallows Haman has prepared!
Within this hour, that reverend old man,
Dragged from your palace precincts by his order,
Dressed in your kingly purple, will be hanged.

AHASUERUS.

What light, what horror burst upon my soul!
(*Rising.*)
My blood is all aflame with shame and rage.
I was his plaything, then! Heaven lighten me!
One moment—let me think.
Call Mordecai. I will hear his statement.
(*Exit* AHASUERUS.)

HAMAN.
(*To* ESTHER.)

Queen, I am stricken with amazement here.
I am deceived; nay, I have been betrayed

By those that hate the Jews, heaven be my witness.
By slaying them I thought to save yourself,
Use all my credit, Queen, on their behalf.
You see the King is staggered by the news.
I know how one can press or check the King;
I make him calm or raging as I please.
The interests of the Jews are sacred to me.
Speak, Queen, I swear and your dead enemies
Shall make amends if I have injured you.
Whom would you have destroyed?

ESTHER.

Go, traitor! leave me.
Jews expect nothing from a wretch like you.
O miserable man! Avenging God,
Ready to judge you, holds His balance up.
Soon shall just sentence be pronounced on you.
Tremble! God's reign approaches, thine is over.

HAMAN.

Yes, I confess thy God a fearful God;
But will He cherish pitiless hate against me?
Ah! it is done, my pride is forced to bend,
Pitiless Haman is reduced to prayer!
(*Flings himself at* ESTHER'S *feet.* ESTHER *moves to the centre.*)
By the salvation of the Jews, O Queen,
And by these queenly feet that I embrace,
And by that wise old man, your kingdom's honour,
Deign to appease the rage of this fierce King;
Save Haman, trembling at your sacred knees!

(*Enter* AHASUERUS.)

AHASUERUS.

This traitor dares to put his hands upon you!

(HAMAN *up.*)

I read his treachery in his guilty eyes,
His guilty looks confirm what you have said

And show me all the course of his attempt.
Tear the dog's spirit out this very instant
Before his door, instead of Mordecai,
And let his death appease the earth and skies.
Then let his body be a public show.

(HAMAN *led away by* GUARDS.)

(*Enter* MORDECAI *in front.*)

Man loved of Heaven, my safety and my joy,
Thy King is no more governed by the wicked;
My eyes have seen the truth. Crime is confounded.
Come, shine beside me,
(MORDECAI *is led to the* QUEEN'S *seat, right of* AHASUERUS.)
Ranked as is your due,
Prince of my realm and chiefest Counsellor.
I have been blind; but now, no longer blind,
I put my trust in one whom age makes wise,
And wisdom merciful, and mercy blessed.

By God's great sun your lightest word this day
Shall be a law to Persia for all time.

MORDECAI.

O King, whom Heaven ever keep in care,
The peril presses on the Jews.
Lord, save them!

AHASUERUS.

They shall be saved. Come, take these orders out;
Revoke the cruel edict of that man.

(*A* GUARD *takes orders.*)

CHORUS.

Bountiful mercy of our guardian God,
O star in darkness, O white light of dawn,
After the night; O blessed touch of rain,
Changing the desert's salty sand to flowers;
O well of water in the blinding heat,
When even the asp goes mad; O shining city

Seen by the footsore after hours of travel;
O land, that far away, beyond wild water,
Gleams out at evening; O port of peace
After the sea; we thank Thee for this mercy.

1ST CHORUS.

Once, when of old the King of Egypt followed,
With hosts of horse, our fathers as they fled,
God made the sea a road for us to tread,
Made the rock give us drink, the desert bread,
But smote our foes. His sea rose, they were swallowed.

2ND CHORUS.

And as our fathers wandered then
God guided them to their desire
By a bright angel in the hearts of men,
And in the day by cloud and in the night by fire.

Until they reached the green land full of springs.
The cornland that men reap but need not plough,
The happy hill;
All the way there God hid them in His wings,
Even as He hides us now, and ever will,
And ever will!

1st Chorus.

Though men deal proudly, God is over them.

(*A crying without.*)

Ahasuerus.

What is the noise of tumult in the street?

Chorus.

Sounds as of slaying and of lamentation.

Esther.

O King, I dread that crying in the city!
It must be that your orders come too late

To save our fellow-captives. Swords are flashing,
And there are screams of women, and men falling.
Hark, King, they kill the Jews!

CHORUS.

O Heaven, save them!
Save us, O Heaven!

AHASUERUS.

By the fires of Bel
I am too late!

(*Enter* ASAPH, *Left.*)

What is it, Asaph? Speak!

ASAPH.

O King, my spirit faints, I cannot speak.

AHASUERUS.

Is murder being done without there?

ASAPH.

Yes.

Or no, not murder, but a red accounting,
A settling for old sin. Unseen by us,
Unseen in the air about us, our bad deeds
Grow into devils, who in our happy time,
When it is sunshine with us, startle out
And take us by the throat and shatter us.

AHASUERUS.

Are you so taken by the throat? You shudder
Like one with the fever, and your lips are white.

ASAPH.

O King, I shudder at the risk you ran.

AHASUERUS.

The Queen ran risk, not I.

ASAPH.

No. Hark, my Lord.
When you did bid us take that traitor hence,

We dragged him out, and down the corridor
Past the bronze doorways of Prince Memucan.
There, with full voice, he shouted: "Memucan,
Meres, Adathan, help me! Call our friends!
All is discovered! Save me! Kill the King!
Rush in and kill him! Save me! Memucan,
You swore to kill him. I am to be killed.
Memucan's men, come, save me! Kill these dogs,
And kill the King! You shall have all my wealth,
My silver mines, my palaces, all, all,
And be my princes."
But he called in vain.
Prince Memucan was gone, with all his men,
Gone over sea this morning at your bidding.
He called to empty courts where doves picked food

And the pale fountain trembled like an
aspen.
Then, seeing that none answered, he was
stilled.
A shuddering took him, and he called for
drink,
And prayed that he might be brought back
to you,
To tell you all the plot of Memucan,
That you might spare his life.
I, having my orders, told him he must die.
By this time we had reached his palace gate
And stood beneath the gallows he had built.
There, where he planned to murder Mordecai,
Men put a rope about his own doomed neck.
Then he besought a grace, he asked the time.
We told him, "Almost the fifth hour;" and he
Smiled haggardly and said, "Astrologers
Foretold that on this day at the fifth hour
A great event would alter life for me.

Wait till the hour, one little minute's peace,
While I pray God."
We waited, while he prayed.
And the square filled with silent men and
women,
His victims, now avenged.
They were as silent as a forest is
In the great heat before a thunderstorm,
Before the first few drops strike the parched
leaves.
But one mad woman, who had lost her son,
Babbled, "He will escape, for all their
power!"
It wanted but a minute of the hour
Of Fifth Hour Sacrifice. The ankle bells
Tinkled as women passed; the old priests
shuffled,
Lighting the incense in the temple braziers,
And acolytes in red came to the gates.
O King, I shudder at that ruffian's guile.

Even as the trumpet of the hour sounded,
There came the clink of arms, and swordsmen came
(A band of swordsmen, Prince Adathan's men)
Up from the water gateway to the square.
Then Haman shouted, "Help, Adathan's men!
Adathan, help! See! I am Haman here.
Charge! Set upon these guards and set me free."
Then with a cheer those swordsmen charged the gallows
And bore us back, and snatched him from our hands.
But at that word of setting Haman free
Those silent watchers there, the multitude,
His victims from of old, the men ground down,

The women bartered and the children
stunted,
Screamed all together in a venomous hate,
And seizing stones and sticks, or with bare
hands,
They set upon those swordsmen of Adathan's
And routed them; so we recovered Haman.
And Haman bit his lips
And said: "Those were the swordsmen I had
hired
To kill the Jews indeed, but afterward
To kill the King and crown me King instead.
I should have been a King at this Fifth
Hour.
Only have mercy, I will tell you all."
Lord, I have looked on fire and on flood,
Both are less terrible than the mob in rage.
When he cried "Mercy," all that sea of men
Roared like a battle, rose like a toppling tide,
Swept over him and choked him out of life.

The Jews are saved: Haman is dead. The crowd
Tore him piecemeal. Now, by the rope that choked him,
They drag his corpse to be a public show.
This is the seal of office that he held.

(*Gives signet.*)

AHASUERUS.

Prince Mordecai, take this seal of office.
I give you Haman's property and power;
Possess in justice his ill-gotten wealth.
I break the fatal slavery of the Jews.
All who elect to stay in Persia here
Are henceforth equal with my Persian subjects;
All who would fain go home, are free to go.
And, so that men may tremble at the Name
Of Esther's God, I will rebuild His Temple,
Using sweet cedar where the Jews put oak,
Marble instead of stone, and gold for brass.

And may the Jews in all their solemn feasts
Keep this day's triumph holy, and my name
Forever living in their memory.

ESTHER.

O God, by roads unknown to mortal men
Thy wisdom brings eternal plans to be!

CHORUS.

Even but now our enemies beset our feet to
ruin us;
But in the darkness of our doom there rose a
star to lighten us!

The proud man planned to shed our blood;
his voice went ringing to the sky;
His sin has turned upon himself; his bloody
thoughts have made him die.

Now like a cedar that the storm uproots on
windy Lebanon,
He lies on earth: I passed his haunt, but God
had blown and he was gone.

(*Here the* KING *and* ESTHER *move off Right.*)

(*The* CHORUS *come slowly down stage speaking, and pass off in front.*)

Esther has saved us: we are raised out of the dust: we are set free;
We may go home to Zion's hill, forgetting all our slavery.

We may rebuild the sacred town and tread the dear green fields again;
We are set free to love and live, forgetting all these years of pain.

Let us give thanks that pride has fall'n. The evils that the wicked shape
Come by one road, but God has made a myriad pathways of escape.

(*They leave the stage here.*)

And when the evil presses worst, seeming to triumph over good,

There comes, as here, the thing that saves,
by secret ways not understood.

(*They pass away.*)

CURTAIN.

BERENICE

A Tragedy by
RACINE.

PERSONS

TITUS

BERENICE

ANTIOCHUS

PAULINUS

ARSACES

PHENICE

RUTILIUS

BERENICE

ACT I.

ANTIOCHUS.

Let us stay here a moment. I can see
That all this stately palace is unknown
To you, Arsaces.
This lonely room is where the Emperor comes
To find some quiet from the cares of Court.
Here sometimes, too, he comes to see the
Queen:
The Queen's apartments lie beyond that door.
And now, Arsaces, go to see the Queen,
And tell her that I beg that she will grant
What I dare ask, some secret words with me.
Say I regret to be importunate.

ARSACES.

You, Lord, importunate? You, her faithful
friend;

You, generously careful of her interests;
You, that Antiochus who loved her once,
One of the greatest Kings in all the East!
Even if she be about to marry Titus,
Does that put such a distance 'twixt you two?

ANTIOCHUS.

No. Go, my friend. Mind not those other matters;
See if I may but speak with her alone.

(*Exit* ARSACES.)

Alas, Antiochus! Can I ever dare
To tell the Queen I love her? Why, I tremble
Already, and my agitated heart
Now fears the moment it so much desired.
Queen Berenice has left me without hope;
She ordered me never to speak of love.
Five years I have been silent, five long years,
Hiding my love under a veil of friendship.
And now to-day I have to speak with her.

Titus, they say, is marrying her to-day.
But can I think that she whom Titus plans
To make his Empress, will be kind to me
More than she was of old in Palestine?
Titus is marrying her, and at the altar
I come to tell her that I love her too.
What good can come to me from telling her?
Ah! I must go and not displease her thus.
I will withdraw, and go, and without speaking
Pass far away from her—forget her—die.

(*Pause.*)

I cannot always suffer from such torment,
Nor shed these secret tears unknown to her
And lose her, through the fearing her displeasure.
Oh, lovely Queen, and why should you be vexed?
I do not come to beg you not to marry;
I do not come to beg that you should love me,

Ah! woe is me! I only come to say
That now, even now,
After so long being certain that my rival
Would find some fatal drawback to his marriage,
I find that I was wrong; that all can be,
And that your marriage now is being prepared.
Oh, sad example of long constancy!
After five years of love and empty hope
I am still faithful, though I hope no longer.
She could not blame me, she will pity me.
Whatever happens I will speak to her.
Alas! what can a hopeless lover fear,
Having resolved to see her face no more?
(*Enter* ARSACES.)
Can I go in, Arsaces?

ARSACES.

Lord, I have seen the Queen—
I only pierced the crowd with difficulty;

She is surrounded with adoring people
Drawn to her palace by her coming greatness.
Titus has ceased his mourning for his father
And takes to wooing, and the rumour goes
That before night the happy Berenice
Will change the title "Queen" for that of
"Empress."

ANTIOCHUS.

Alas!

ARSACES.

But how can such news trouble you?

ANTIOCHUS.

So, then, I cannot speak alone with her?

ARSACES.

Lord, you will see her. She has been informed
That you would see her here at once alone.
She granted your desire with a look,
And doubtless waits a favourable moment
To escape the crowds of courtiers that surround her.

ANTIOCHUS.

Enough. And those important orders given—
Have you fulfilled them?

ARSACES.

Lord, you know my zeal.
There are some ships prepared in Ostia harbour
Ready to sail the instant you command;
But whom do you intend to send in them?

ANTIOCHUS.

One can but go when I have seen the Queen.

ARSACES.

Who can but go?

ANTIOCHUS.

Myself.

ARSACES.

You, King Antiochus?

ANTIOCHUS.

Yes, when I leave this palace,
I shall leave Rome, Arsaces, and for ever.

ARSACES.

I am surprised, and justly. What, great King,
After Queen Berenice has kept you here
For three long years, far from your State, in Rome;
Now, when she needs your presence at her marriage,
When her great lover, Titus, marrying her,
Prepares such glory for her!

ANTIOCHUS.

Arsaces, leave this talk, it troubles me:
Let her enjoy her fortune.

ARSACES.

Ah, my Lord,
Her coming glory makes the Queen forget you,
And enmity succeeds friendship betrayed?

ANTIOCHUS.

Not so. I never hated the Queen less.

ARSACES.

What then? Has the new Emperor grown proud
Since his accession, and been cold to you?
Does any feeling of his change of mind
Drive you to go from Rome?

ANTIOCHUS.

Titus has never seemed the colder to me.
I should be wrong to make complaint.

ARSACES.

Why go, then?
What fancy makes you your own enemy?
Heaven raises to the throne a Prince who loves you,
A Prince who saw you in the war seek death
Or glory, in his steps; whose princely courage,
Helped by yourself, subdued the rebel Jews.

The Prince remembers well the famous day
Which ended the long siege. Do you remember?
The enemy quiet in their triple rampart,
Watching unharmed our impotent attacks,
And you advancing with the scaling ladders,
Carrying death among them up the walls?
That was the day, the day you were near death,
The day when Titus found you almost dead,
Bleeding from many wounds, and kissed you there
As the most gallant man in the forlorn.
Now, sir, you ought to wait for your reward
For all your blood shed then. If you must go
Back to your kingdom, go not unrewarded,
Wait till Imperial Cæsar sends you back
Laden with honours as the friend of Rome.
Can nothing change your mind? You do not answer.

ANTIOCHUS.

What would you have me say?
I want one moment's speech with Berenice.

ARSACES.

Well, Lord?

ANTIOCHUS.

Her fate will settle mine.

ARSACES.

And how?

ANTIOCHUS.

I wish to hear her speak about her marriage.
If she admits the rumour to be true,
If it be true that she will marry Cæsar,
If Titus makes her Empress, I shall go.

ARSACES.

What makes this marriage so distasteful to you?

ANTIOCHUS.

When we have gone, I'll tell you.

ARSACES.

I am troubled.

ANTIOCHUS.

Here is the Queen. Good-bye; do as I bade.

(*Enter* BERENICE *and* PHENICE.)

BERENICE.

At last I can escape the importunity
Of all the crowds of friends whom fortune makes me.
I come from all their tedious acclamation
To find a friend who speaks out of his heart;
And I have been impatient, for I thought
You had neglected me.
I said of old that good Antiochus
Was constant in his loving care for me;
He was my friend in good or evil fortune;
And now to-day, when the gods seem to give me
Honours which I would gladly share with him,

This same Antiochus hides from my sight
And leaves me to an unknown crowd alone.

ANTIOCHUS.

Then is it true, this that the rumour says,
That marriage is to end the long, long court-
ship?

BERENICE.

Lord, these last days have been most sorrow-
ful;
For this long mourning that the Emperor
kept,
Had kept him from me, and his love seemed
changed
From those old days when he was always
with me.
Now he is silent, troubled, ever weeping,
His only speeches seem like sad farewells;
So you can judge of my anxiety.

ANTIOCHUS.

Now his first tenderness has come again?

BERENICE.

You saw last night how his religious cares
Were backed by solemn vote, when in full house
The Senate ranked his Father with the gods?
His pious mourning now gives place to love,
To thought for her he loves. At the same time,
Not even telling me of his intention,
He called the Senate, and by proud decree
Enlarged the frontiers of my Palestine,
Joining to it Arabia and Syria.
And if I can believe the voice of friends
And his own promises so often given,
He means to crown me Queen of that expanse,
To add to all my titles that of Empress;
And he is coming here to tell me this.

ANTIOCHUS.

And I come here to say good-bye for ever.

BERENICE.

What are you saying? Good-bye?
And your face changes.

ANTIOCHUS.

Madam, I have to go.

BERENICE.

And not say why?

ANTIOCHUS.

No; I must go and see her face no more.

BERENICE.

Speak, Lord! What is the mystery of your
going?

ANTIOCHUS.

Then listen to me for the last, last time.
Lady, if in your high degree of glory
You ever think about your childhood's home,
You may remember that I saw you there
And loved you.

You may remember, too, how once your brother,
Agrippa, spoke for me, and it may be,
Perhaps, you were not vexed to hear I loved you.
Then, to my sorrow, Titus came: he saw you,
He pleased you, for of course he came before you
In all the splendour of a man who bears
The vengeances of Rome in his two hands,
Making Judæa pale.
I think that I was one of those first conquered;
And then it came to pass that your own lips
Told me to speak no more of love to you.
And yet I hoped; a long, long time I hoped,
Following like your shadow in the palace.
And then you made me promise, made me swear
Never to speak again of love to you.

But when you made me swear, my heart knew well
That I could only love you till I die.

BERENICE.

You must not say this.

ANTIOCHUS.

It is five years since I said anything;
And after this I shall be silent always.
And then I went with Titus to the wars,
Hoping to die, or hoping at the least
That deeds of mine might make you hear my name.
And we were at the war, Titus and I;
All that I did was far surpassed by him.
I came behind in war, even as in love.
Then, when the war and the long siege were over,
And the last pale and bloody-featured rebels

Came from their burnt-out ruins and their
hunger,
He came in triumph home, and you with him.
I stayed behind, and went from place to
place,
Where you had been, where I had worshipped
you;
But my despair drove me to follow you,
And Titus welcomed me and brought me
here.
And then I hoped—always I had some
hope—
That something here might make a way for
me.
But now my fate's fulfilled; your glory comes.
There will be plenty here to pray for you,
To watch your glorious crowning, without
me.
I could not bring rejoicing, only tears,
So I shall go, loving you more than ever.

BERENICE.

I did not think that on my marriage day
Any man's son would dare make love to me.
I will forget all that. I'll say farewell.
God knows that in the honours coming to me
I hoped that you would watch my happiness,
Because, like all the world, I honoured you,
And Titus loved you, and you admired Titus.
You are like Titus, and a hundred times
I have been pleased to see your likeness to him.

ANTIOCHUS.

Yes, that is why I go. I go too late.
Would I had gone before, and spared myself
This news of Titus and the grief it causes,
Then I should not have heard you speak his name
Nor known your love for him, but gone, and seen
No more your eyes, which see me every day

Yet cannot notice me.
Good-bye. I go. My heart's too full to speak;
I know that I shall love you till I die.
Fear not that I shall talk of my misfortune,
But if you hear that I am dead, then think
That once I was alive. Good-bye. Good-bye.

(*Exit.*)

PHENICE.

Oh, how I pity him! Such faithfulness
Deserved more luck, good Lady. Don't you pity him?

BERENICE.

His going so
Leaves me, I grant you, with a troubled mind.

PHENICE.

I would have kept him back.

BERENICE.

I keep him back?
No; rather would I lose the memory of him.
Could I encourage such a senseless love?

PHENICE.

Titus has not yet spoken out his mind.
Rome looks upon you with most jealous eyes,
Lady, the rigour of the Roman laws
Makes me afraid for you.
Romans can marry none but Roman women.
Rome hates all royalty, and you are Queen.

BERENICE.

Phenice, the time for terror is gone by,
And Titus loves me. He is all-powerful.
If he but speak, the Senate will salute him
And crown his statues with the flowering laurel.
Have you not seen the splendours of to-night?
The torches, and the lamps and bonfires burning;
The Eagles of the Army standing ranked;
The crowd of Kings, the Consuls and the Senate,

All lending all their glory to my lover.
Purple and gold and laurels for his victory,
And all those eyes from every land on earth
Staring on him alone with greedy looks,
Watching that splendid port, that gentle presence.
Oh, with what awe and with what gladness too,
All of those hearts assure him of their faith!
Can one see this not thinking as I think,
That even if he had been obscurely born,
The world would still have known him as its King?
Now, while all Rome is making prayer for Titus,
And offers sacrifice for the new reign,
Let us too go and offer prayer for him.
Then I will go to him, and we shall speak
All that our full hearts hold for one another.

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

(TITUS, PAULINUS.)

TITUS.

Has no one seen the King of Comagena,
Or does he know that I await him here?

PAULINUS.

Sir, I have seen the Queen.
The King of Comagena had been with her,
But had gone out shortly before I came.
I have left word to warn him of your orders.

TITUS.

Enough. What was the Queen doing?

PAULINUS.

Sir, she was going out
To pray the gods for your prosperity.

TITUS.

Too kind Princess, alas!

PAULINUS.

Prince, why be sad for her?
Half of the Eastern world will now be hers.
You pity her?

TITUS.

Paulinus, let all leave you here with me.

(*Exit* GUARDS.)

Alas! Rome is uncertain of my plans
And waits to know the fortunes of the Queen.
The secrets of her heart and mine, Paulinus,
Are now the talk of all the earthly world.
Now the time comes, I must explain myself.
What do they say about the Queen and me?
Speak; what do you hear?

PAULINUS.

I hear on every side
About your virtue, Emperor, and her beauty.

TITUS.

What do they say about my love for her?
What do they expect from it?

PAULINUS.

You can do what you please—love—cease to love;
The Court will think as you and take your part.

TITUS.

Yes, I have seen that Court, and close at hand,
That Court too careful to applaud its Master;
I've seen that Court approve the crimes of Nero,
Go on their knees to him, and consecrate him.
Idolatrous courtiers shall not be my judge;
I will not lend my ear to flatterers.
I wish to know, from you, what people say.
You promise this. Respect and fear for me
Keep all complaints from coming to my ears.
Now, dear Paulinus, let me see and hear;

Be you my ears and eyes, interpret for me
The varying hearts of all my countrymen;
Let your sincerity bring truth to me
Across all lies, beyond all flattery.
Now speak! What ought Queen Berenice to hope?
Will Rome be cruel or indulgent to her?
Will Rome be angry if so fair a Queen
Be raised as Empress to the throne of Cæsar?

PAULINUS.

Lord, there can be no doubt, whate'er the cause,
Be it reason or caprice, Rome does not want her
To be the Empress here. They say, of course,
That she is good and beautiful, and seems
Made to be Empress over human beings;
They say she has a truly Roman heart,
And has a thousand virtues; but, my Lord,

You know the rest. Rome, by unchanging law,
Will have no foreign blood mixed with her blood,
Will recognize no children born of marriage
Made against Roman custom, Roman law.
Besides, you know, in banishing her Kings
Rome took a hatred to the name of King.
Though Rome is faithful to the race of Cæsars,
That hate of Kings and Queens is furious still.
For Julius Cæsar longed for Cleopatra,
But dared not marry her. She was a Queen.
Mark Antony, who made an idol of her,
Dared never marry her. And since that time
Caligula and Nero, monstrous men,
Who stamped beneath their feet the laws of Rome,

Still feared that law, and did not dare to
make
Marriages hateful to the Roman heart.
You have commanded me to be sincere—
Well, in the East, a slave, whom you set free,
A man still half a slave, a branded man,
Marked with hot irons, Lord, the freed man
Pallas,
Married two Queens of Berenice's blood;
And do you think that you could marry her
Without outraging Rome while men know
that?
You, marry her, while three days' sail from
Rome
A branded slave, freed from our fetters lately,
Marries her relatives!
That is what Romans think about your love.
It may well be that ere this evening comes
The Imperial Senate's self will come to you,
To tell you all that I have told you now.

To say that Rome falls at your very feet
And asks that you should make another choice
More worthy her and you.
You might be thinking of your answer, Lord.

TITUS.

Alas! they ask me to give up myself.

PAULINUS.

It is a bitter struggle, I confess.

TITUS.

Bitterer a thousand times than you can think.
It has been very life to see her here,
Each day to see her, love her, and to please her.
I have a hundred times given thanks to God
For bringing all the East beneath my Father
And putting bleeding Rome into his hands.
I have desired my dead Father's place,

Much as I loved him,
In hope of making Berenice Empress.
And now, Paulinus, when the time has come,
In spite of all my love and all her beauty,
In spite of all my lover's oaths and tears,
Now that I have Imperial power to crown her,
Now that I love her deeper than before,
Now that a happy marriage might unite us
After five years of prayers and hopes and love,
After all these, Paulinus—Oh, ye gods!

PAULINUS.

What is it, Lord?

TITUS.

I part from her for ever.
If I have made you speak to me to-day,
It was because I wished that your great friendship

Should help to kill my love which dies most
hard.
Believe me, it is hard to conquer love;
My heart will bleed for more than one day
yet.
My love was peace in those first days of love,
When still my Father was the Emperor,
I was the master of my fate and free,
Accounting to myself for my desires;
But when the gods recalled my Father to
them,
My pleasant error was removed from me;
I felt the heavy load imposed upon me;
I knew that presently I should be forced
To give up self and all the loves of self,
And do the Will of God and not my own,
And give my life to work, not to myself.
And now, to-day, Rome watches what I do.
Shameful to me and ominous to her
If my first act should scatter every custom

And build my happiness on broken law.
I have resolved to make this sacrifice;
But how prepare Queen Berenice for it?
How can a man begin?
These last eight days full twenty times I've tried
To tell her this,
But at the first word my poor stumbling tongue
Seemed frozen in my mouth, I could not speak.
I hoped my sorrow and anxiety
Might make her feel our common misery;
But she has not suspected and knows nothing.
Now I have gathered all my constancy,
Now I must see her and must tell her all.
Now I am waiting for Antiochus:
I shall give him the prize I cannot keep,
And bid him take her back into the East.

He will leave Rome to-morrow with the Queen,
And I shall see her now and tell her this,
I shall now speak to her for the last time.

PAULINUS.

Lord, I expected this from your great glory;
I knew your heart would not destroy its work,
That you, the conqueror of so many nations,
Would conquer all your passions if you willed.

TITUS.

Glory is cruel under its fine names;
My sad eyes find her lovelier than glory.
If I have dared the death in seeking glory,
It was because her beauty lit in me
A longing for all lovely, splendid things.
You know quite well I did not always have
Renown or glory. I'd an evil name,
My youth was spent within the Court of Nero

And followed ways I love not to recall.
It was my seeing her that changed my life,
And to please her I loved, I did strange things
And came back triumphing. But blood and tears
Were not sufficient to win love from her,
So then I undertook to help the wretched.
I was more happy than my tongue can say
When she was pleased with work that I had done.
I owe her everything, and as reward,
Reward for all the good that she has done me,
I shall say "Go, and never see me more."

PAULINUS.

Sir, do you fear that she will think you faithless?
The very Senate is surprised to think
How many honours you have given the Queen.

You have given her magnificence of power,
Up to Euphrates you have made her Queen
Over a hundred peoples.

TITUS.

But petty solace for a grief so great.
I know the Queen; I know only too well
That she has asked for nothing but my heart.
I loved her, she loved me; and since that day—
I cannot say if it were glad or sorry —
Her life has had no object but her love.
Unknown at Court, a stranger here in Rome,
She passes all her days with no more thought
Save that she see me some time, and the rest
Expect to see me.
And if, as sometimes happens, I am late,
I find her weeping.
All that there is most powerful in love—
Joy, beauty, glory, virtue, are in her.

For five long years each day that I have seen her
Has given me the joy the first sight had.
Let's think no more, because the more I think,
The more my made up mind shakes in its purpose.
Once more, once more, one must not think about it.
I know my duty and must follow it,
Whether I live or die is no great matter.

(*Enter* RUTILIUS.)

RUTILIUS.

My lord, Queen Berenice would speak with you.

TITUS.

Paulinus—

PAULINUS.

So, Lord, you seem all ready to draw back.
Remember all your noble plans; it's time.

TITUS.

Well, let us see her. Let her enter there.

(*Enter* BERENICE.)

BERENICE.

Do not be vexed if with a too great zeal
I break the secret of your solitude.
While your Court rings with all your gifts to me,
Would it be right were I to hold my peace?
Your mourning time is past; you are alone,
And none can hinder you; and yet, my Lord,
You do not come to see me as of old.
I hear you offer me another crown,
Yet hear it not from you. Give me more love,
Give me less glory, Lord. Can your love show
Only through orders of the Senate, then?
Ah, Titus! what new care does your love bring me?

Can it give naught but princedoms? Ah!
Since when
Have you believed that greatness touches
me?
A look, a sigh, a word out of your mouth,
Makes the ambition of a heart like mine.
See me more often, do not give me things.
Are all your moments given to the Empire?
After eight days have you no word to say?
Lord, reassure my trouble with a word.
Did you then speak of me when I surprised
you?
Lord, was I at the least within your thought?

TITUS.

Doubt it not, Lady. I attest the gods
That you are ever present in my thought.
I swear that never absence, self, nor time,
Can tear you from this heart that worships
you.

BERENICE.

You swear eternal worship, but you swear
Most coldly. Why bring in the gods to witness?
Did you want oaths to overcome mistrust?
My heart does not contain mistrust of you;
I should believe you on a simple sigh.

TITUS.

Lady!

BERENICE.

Well, Lord? But what, you do not answer.
You turn your eyes and seem confounded, Sire.
Can you not see me, save with looks of grief?
Does your mind always mourn your Father's death?
Can nothing charm away this eating care?

TITUS.

Would God my Father lived still,
I'd be happy!

BERENICE.

Lord, this mourning
Justly proceeds from piety; but now
You have paid tribute to his memory
Enough; you owe now other cares to Rome.
I dare not speak to you about myself,
But formerly I could bring peace to you,
And you have listened to me even with pleasure.
You mourn a father still (alas, poor grief!)
While I, the memory makes me shudder still:
They would have dragged me from the man I love,
Dragged me, whose broken-heartedness you know
When you have left me even for a day.
I think that I should die upon the day
That they forbade me see you.

TITUS.

Lady, alas! what do you say to me?

What time is this for speech? For pity, stop!
I am unworthy and your goodness kills me.

BERENICE.

Unworthy, Lord! How could you be?
Does what you call my goodness weary you?

TITUS.

No, Lady, never. But since I must speak,
My heart seems burning in a living fire.

BERENICE.

Go on.

TITUS.

Alas!

BERENICE.

Speak!

TITUS.

Rome, the Empire—

BERENICE.

Well?

TITUS.

We'll go, Paulinus—I cannot speak to her!

(*Exit* TITUS *and* PAULINUS.)

BERENICE.

What, leave me thus and never say the reason!
What fatal thing is this? What have I done?
What does he want? What does this silence mean?

PHENICE.

It seems more strange the more one thinks on it.
Does anything come to your memory
That might have prejudiced him against you, Lady?

BERENICE.

Believe me, dear,
When I recall the memories of the past,
From when I saw him first to this sad day,
Loving him well has been my only fault.
Could I have said a thing that has displeased him?
Have I with too much warmth returned his gifts?

Or blamed his depth of mourning for his
Father?
Or is it that he fears the hate of Rome?
He fears, perhaps; he fears to wed a Queen!
Alas! if that were true,—but no! so often
He has declared to me a hundred times
His love is stronger than their cruel laws—
A hundred times. He must explain his
silence.
I cannot live in this uncertainty;
I could not live, thinking that I had hurt
him,
Or that he did not care. Wait, let me think!
Now that I think, it seems explained to me.
He knows the love of King Antiochus,
Perhaps that vexes him. And I was told
That he expects Antiochus even now.
Let us not seek elsewhere the explanation;
Doubtless the trouble that alarms him so
Is but a light suspicion easily killed.

Would Heaven, Titus, that a rival came,
A man more powerful than you, to tempt me,
To put more Empires at my feet than you,
To buy my love with sceptres numberless,
While you had nothing for me but your love—
Ah! then, dear Titus, you would see the price
I put upon my heart. But come, Phenice,
Let us be quiet, for he loves me still,
And I do wrong to count myself unhappy.
If he be jealous, 'tis a sign of love.

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

(TITUS, ANTIOCHUS, ARSACES.)

TITUS.

So you are going, Prince? What sudden cause
Presses your going? (One might call it flight.)
You hide from me until you say good-bye.
Come, do you leave us as an enemy?
What will the Court, what will the Empire say?
Come! as your friend, have you a grudge against me?
Have I neglected you in all this crowd
Of Kings and Sovereigns pressing in the Court?
You were my friend during my Father's life,

Friendship was all I had to give you then.
Now, when my friendship has so much to
give,
You fly from me.
Come, can you think that I forget old friends
And think about my greatness more than
them,
And cast them off as things of no more use?
Prince, you are more than ever needful to me.

ANTIOCHUS.

I, Lord?

TITUS.

Yes, you.

ANTIOCHUS.

Alas, Sir, what can you expect but prayer
From an unhappy Prince?

TITUS.

Prince, I remember that my victory
Owed half its glory to your gallant deeds.
Rome has seen many of your captives pass,

And in the Capitol the spoils you took
Even from the Jews.
Now I expect from you no deeds of war,
Only your voice. I know that Berenice
Counts you her one true friend now here in Rome;
You, only, make one heart and soul with us.
Now, in the name of this most constant friendship
I bid you use the power you have upon her.
See her on my behalf.

ANTIOCHUS.

I? See the Queen?
Sir, I have said farewell to her for ever.

TITUS.

See her but once again for me, Antiochus.

ANTIOCHUS.

Lord, you must speak to her. She worships you.

Why rob yourself of such a charming task?
Sir, she is waiting for you with impatience.
I answer, Sir, for her obedience.
She herself told me, she will marry you:
You need but see her, Sir, for she is won.

TITUS.

Time was, so sweet a speech would have
seemed sweet;
I should have been most happy. Even to-
day
I thought to be most happy; yet to-day
I have to leave her, Prince.

ANTIOCHUS.

Leave her? You, Lord?

TITUS.

Such is my destiny.
This is no marriage day for her and Titus;
I pleased myself in vain with that sweet hope.

Now, Prince, to-morrow she must sail with you.

ANTIOCHUS.

O Heaven! what do I hear?

TITUS.

Pity my greatness!
Being Master of the world, I rule her fortune;
I can make Kings and then can unmake them,
And yet my heart is not my own to give.
Rome, ever bitter against Kings, disdains
An Empress born in the purple with a crown
And all a hundred Kings for forefathers.
My heart is free to love some common woman,
Rome would with pleasure see me marry one,
Even the most worthless in the city bounds—
Even Julius Cæsar bowed to this decree.
To-morrow, if she still be here, the Romans

Will come in fury here to bid her go.
Spare her this insult. Since we must surrender,
Let us surrender finely.
My eight days' silence and my absence from her
Must have prepared her for this cruel speech.
Now at this very time she waits for me
To tell her of the trouble of my heart.
Now spare my heart the pain of telling her.
Go to her and explain my misery:
Above all, beg that I may keep from her.
Be the one witness of her tears and mine,
Take to her my farewells and bring me hers;
But let us both avoid that deadly meeting
That would destroy our last poor constancy.
And if the hope that I shall always love her
Can make the bitterness of parting less,
Swear to her, Prince, I shall be always faithful

And carry to my grave my love for her.
My reign will be a long, long banishment
If Heaven, not content with taking her,
Pains me still farther with a long, long life.
You, who are only linked to her by friendship,
Do not abandon her in her distress,
And let her going back into the East
Be glorious like a triumph, not a flight.
And may your friendship last; and let my name
Be often in your quiet talks together.
Your Kingdoms shall henceforward touch each other,
And the Euphrates be your boundary.
The Senate will confirm this by a vote.
I join Cilicia to your Comagena.
Good-bye! And do not leave my lovely Queen.
She was the one desire of my heart,

The one thing I shall love till my last breath.

(*Exit* TITUS.)

ARSACES.

So Heaven does justice to you! You will go,
But she'll go with you. Heaven does not take her,
But gives her.

ANTIOCHUS.

Give me the time to breathe!
It is too great a change and I am shaken:
All that I love is put into my hands—
Can I believe what I have heard just now?
And if I can believe, should I be glad?

ARSACES.

But, my great Lord, what can I think of you?
What barrier is there to your happiness?
A little while ago you came from here
All shaken from your last farewells with her,

Going, because her marriage broke your heart.

And now the marriage is the broken thing,

So what can grieve you now? Go where love calls you.

ANTIOCHUS.

Arsaces, I am charged to take her home.

For a long time I shall be close to her;

It may be that in time her heart will change

And think my perseverance something sweet.

Titus o'erwhelms me here with all his greatness:

No one can be compared to him in Rome;

But in the East the Queen may count me something.

ARSACES.

Doubt it not, Lord, all happens as you wish.

ANTIOCHUS.

Ah! how we glory to deceive ourselves!

ARSACES.

And why, "deceive ourselves"?

ANTIOCHUS.

Ah! I might please her.
Might it not be that she would hear my love?
Among her woe, neglected by the world,
Might she not turn to me and stoop to me
For help that she would know my love would render?

ARSACES.

Who could console her better than yourself?
Her fortune changes. Titus flings her off.

ANTIOCHUS.

Alas, for that great change! Now I shall know
Even from her tears how much she loves him, friend.
For I shall see her weep, and pity her.

The only fruit of love that I shall gather,
Tears, which are not for me.

ARSACES.

Why do you thus delight to wound yourself?
Did ever a brave heart show such a weakness?
Open your eyes, my Lord, and bravely think
How many reasons make the Queen your own.
Since Titus from to-day has cast her off,
Think thus. The Queen is forced to marry you.

ANTIOCHUS.

Forced?

ARSACES.

Yes. But grant her, first, some days for tears;
Let her first rush of sorrow run its course,
Then all will speak for you; her hate, her vengeance,

Absence of Titus, presence of yourself,
Time, and three kingdoms that she cannot rule—
Your kingdoms side by side, the better joined.
Interest, reason, friendship, all things bind you.

ANTIOCHUS.

I breathe again. You give me life, Arsaces,
It is a happier prospect. Why delay?
Let us perform what we are bidden do.
We'll find the Queen, and, since the Emperor bids,
Tell her that Titus now abandons her.
No; stay! What am I doing? Can I do it?
I take this cruel task? My heart shrinks from it.
The lovely Berenice to hear from me
That she is cast aside! Unhappy Queen!
Who could have thought that this would be your fate?

ARSACES.

Her anger will not fall on you, but Titus.
You only speak at his request, my Lord.

ANTIOCHUS.

No, we'll not see her; we'll respect her grief.
Plenty will come to tell her of her fall.
Do you not think she will be sad enough
To learn to what contempt Titus condemns her,
Without this final thrust, to have the news
By Titus' only rival? Let us go.
By going thus we shall escape her hatred.

ARSACES.

Sir, here she comes! Think what to do and say.

ANTIOCHUS.

O Heaven!

(*Enter* BERENICE.)

BERENICE.

So, Lord, you are not gone?

ANTIOCHUS.

Lady, I see you looked for Cæsar here.
Blame only Cæsar if you find me here
In spite of my farewells.
Perhaps by this I should have been in Ostia,
Had he not strictly ordered me to stay.

BERENICE.

He wanted you alone. He avoids us.

ANTIOCHUS.

He only kept me here to speak of you.

BERENICE.

Of me, Prince?

ANTIOCHUS.

Yes.

BERENICE.

What could he have to say?

ANTIOCHUS.

Thousands of other men could tell you better
Than I.

BERENICE.

What do you mean?

ANTIOCHUS.

O be not vexed!
Others at such a moment might not keep
Silence so well, but would rejoice, perhaps,
Would swell with pride and joy to break the news;
But I, still trembling; I, as you know well,
Reckoning your quiet dearer than my own,
Would rather vex you than distress you, Queen.
I fear your sorrow more than your annoyance.
Before to-night you will acquit me, Queen.
Lady, good-bye.

BERENICE.

But what strange speech! O stay!
O Prince, I cannot keep my grief from you.
You see before you a distressful Queen,

Whose heart seems killed, who only asks two
words.
I think you said you feared to vex my quiet,
And therefore will not speak.
Lord, if my peace of mind be precious to you,
If I were ever precious in your eyes,
Lighten the darkness that is on my soul.
What did the Emperor say to you?

ANTIOCHUS.

O, Lady,
For God's sake!

BERENICE.

Is my heart's wish so little to you, then?

ANTIOCHUS.

And if I speak, you will forever hate me.

BERENICE.

I beg you speak. I order you to speak.

ANTIOCHUS.

O gods!
Lady, once more, you'll wish I had not
spoken.

BERENICE.

Prince, either calm my mind by speaking now,
Or be assured that here our friendship ends.

ANTIOCHUS.

Queen, after that, I cannot remain silent.
So, since you wish it, I will break the news.
Have no illusions now. For I shall tell you
Miseries, perhaps, of which you dared not think.
I know your very heart. Now be prepared,
For I shall strike your heart's most tender place.
Titus has ordered me. . . .

BERENICE.

What has he ordered?

ANTIOCHUS.

To say to you, that you . . . that you and he. . . .
That you and he must separate, forever.

BERENICE.

Separate? What? Who? I and he, you say?

ANTIOCHUS.

Lady, let be. I must be just to him.
All that a loving and a generous heart
Could hold of wild despair in its worst moment,
Was there in Titus' heart. He wept. He loves you.
But little serves it if he love you still:
The Roman Empire dreads to have a Queen,
So you must separate. You go to-morrow.

BERENICE.

Go! Misery! Phenice!

PHENICE.

Ah, blessed Lady,
This is a bitter blow! It daunts your soul.
Show your soul's greatness.

BERENICE.

Titus to leave me after all his vows,
Titus, who swore to me! I cannot think it!
He cannot leave me.
Perhaps they turn his innocent mind against me,
Some trap is made to tear us from each other,
For Titus loves me, he does not wish my death.
Go now and see him, I would speak with him.
Go!

ANTIOCHUS.

And you could look at me, and think that I—

BERENICE.

You long for this too well to persuade me.
Know, I do not believe you. But true or false,
Keep you forever from my sight henceforth.
Do not you leave me, Phenice, I am faint.

Help me, good Phenice, put your arm here—
so.

(*Exeunt* BERENICE *and* PHENICE.)

ANTIOCHUS.

Do I deceive myself? I heard her rightly?
"Keep me forever henceforth from her sight!"
I think I shall, for should I not have gone
Had Titus not against my will restrained me?
She thought to hurt me, but her hate has
helped me.
You saw me going sick with hopeless love,
Jealous and in despair and wild of head;
And now, Arsaces, after this dismissal
Perhaps I may set out with resignation.

ARSACES.

No, Lord; that less than ever. You must
stay.

ANTIOCHUS.

I stay? To see myself disdained!
See myself punished for the guilt of Titus!

With what injustice and indignity
She doubted of my truth.
She said that Titus loved her, I betrayed her!
Ungrateful Queen, to reckon me a traitor!
At such a time, too; at the fatal moment
When I was telling of my rival's sorrow.
When to console her I had made him seem
Loving and true, more than he is, perhaps.

ARSACES.

Lord, what a pain you take to grieve yourself!
Let her grief go. Let its first anguish pass,
For in a week or month it will be passed.
Stay till it passes.

ANTIOCHUS.

No, I go, Arsaces.
All things excite me to be gone from here,
So let us go. And for a long, long time
Let us not speak of her.
The day is not yet over. Go now, you;

See if her grief has not brought death to her.
Run! I will wait until you come to me;
We'll know if she's alive before we start.

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

BERENICE.

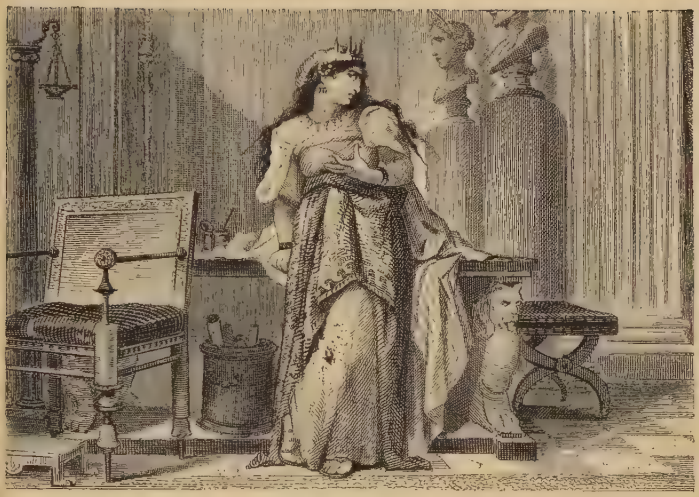
Phenice is late. How slowly the time passes!
The bitter time! My strength is going from me.
Yet rest seems death to me. How late Phenice is!
It is ill-omened, and it frightens me.
It means that she will have no message for me,
That cruel Titus has not heard her speak,
But flies from her.

(*Enter* PHENICE.)

Dear Phenice, have you seen the Emperor?
What did he say? When will he come?

PHENICE.

I saw him, Lady,
Told him the trouble of your soul, and saw
His tears.



BERENICE.

And is he coming?

PHENICE.

Doubt not, madam,
He's coming; but you cannot see him thus;
You are disordered, madam; calm yourself,
And let me raise these fallen veils of lawn
And scattered hairs with which your eyes are hidden,
And marks of tears.

BERENICE.

No, leave them, Phenice; he shall see his work.
What use are these vain ornaments to me?
If all my love and tears and sighs and sorrow—
Nay, if my certain death can call him not,
How shall these useless helps of beauty call him?
They do not call him now.

PHENICE.

Why be unjust?
I hear a noise—the Emperor is coming.
Let us go in; we must avoid his courtiers,
See him alone, within.

(THEY *go off.*)

(*Enter* TITUS, PAULINUS *and* COMPANY.)

TITUS.

Go to the Queen, Paulinus. I will see her.
Leave me alone a little while; now go.

PAULINUS.

(*Going.*)
I fear this seeing the Queen!
Gods, save his glory and the country's honour.
Now for the Queen!

(*Exit* PAULINUS.)

TITUS.

(*Alone.*)
Titus, the time has come; what will you do?

Have you prepared farewells, and steeled
your heart
And braced it to the pitch of cruelty?
For in this bitter struggle now prepared
You need not bravery, but barbarism.
Now you will see her beauty all in tears;
And seeing that, can I fulfil my duty,
And break the heart I love, the heart that
loves me,
And cast her off for ever?
Why should I break that heart? Who bids
me? I do.
Yet why? Has Rome declared her wishes
to me?
Does the mad rabble roar around the palace?
And do I see the State at the cliff's brink?
And can I only save her by this yielding?
All's quiet here, and I, too swift, too swift
To torture self, perhaps imagine evils
That I could thrust aside.

Is there no other means but this to save it?
Would they not see the virtue of the Queen?
Would they not presently confess her Roman?
After such tears and love and faithfulness
Rome would be kind to us.—Ah, no! not Rome!
Hatred of Kings is stamped in every soul,
And cannot be effaced by fear or love.
Rome, casting out her Kings, condemned your Queen.
Coward I am. I love. Give up the Empire,
Go to the wide world's end, and live with her;
Make place for those more fit than I to reign.
Yes, but are these those deeds in the great style,
That were to crown me in men's memories?
Now I have reigned eight days, and till this day
I have done all for love, nothing for honour.

Now I must do what honour asks of me
And break the only link that hinders me.

(*Enter* BERENICE.)

BERENICE.

Leave me, I say! you cannot keep me back,
I must speak with him. So, Lord, you are here!
Well, is it true that Titus casts me off?
That we must part, that Titus orders it?

TITUS.

Lady, have pity on a wretched Prince.
We must not here give way to tenderness;
I have sufficient bitterness at heart
Without your tears to torture me still more.
Recall that heart, which many times of old
Showed me my duty; for the time has come;
But by your love, look simply at my duty
And fortify my heart against yourself,
And help me overcome my love for you.
Duty demands that we must separate.

BERENICE.

You tell me this! I felt sure that you loved me!
My soul that loved you only lived for you.
Were you then ignorant of your Roman laws
When for the first time I confessed my love?
Why did you not, then, say "Oh, wretched Queen,
There is no hope! Why pledge your love to me?
Give not your heart to one who cannot take it."
But no, you took it, but to fling it back,
When that poor heart was living but for you.
Full twenty times they have conspired against us:
Then was the time—why not have cast me then?
There were a thousand things against me then

That might have helped console me in my grief.
I could have blamed your Father, all the Romans,
The Senate and the Empire, all the world,
Rather than this dear hand.
I should not then have had this cruel blow,
Even when I hoped to be most happy here.
Here, when your love can do all that it wishes
When Rome is silent and your Father dead
And all the world is bowing at your feet—
When I have nothing more to fear—then you—
You spurn me.

TITUS.

It was myself who thus destroyed myself,
I was content to live, to let myself
Be charmed; my heart would never search the future
For what might one day disunite us two.

I willed that nothing should o'er come by wishes.
Examined nothing, hoped the impossible;
Perhaps for death rather than these farewells.
The very obstacles increased my love.
And Empire spoke but glory had not spoken
As yet, within my heart, in the clear tone
With which it stirs the hearts of Emperors.
I know the torments that this parting brings,
I know too well I cannot live without you.
But this is not a question now of living;
I have to reign.

BERENICE.

Then reign, harsh King, and be content with glory.
I will not vex you. No; I only waited
Before I would believe that those same lips
After a thousand oaths of love for me,

Would order me away for evermore.
I wished to hear you say it in this place.
Now nothing more. Good-bye for ever, then.
For ever, Sir, it is a cruel word
When one's in love.
A month will come, a year will come, and we—
We shall be parted by a world of seas.
How shall we suffer when the day begins
And the sun climbs the sky and then declines,
And Titus will not see his Berenice.
And all day long she will not look on Titus!
Perhaps you will not feel those days so long;
They may be long for me, too short for you.

TITUS.

Lady, I shall not live for many days;
I hope that presently news of my death
Will show you that I cannot live without you,
Will make you own, that you were loved indeed.

BERENICE.

If that be true, why should we separate?
I do not speak of marriage with you now:
Rome has condemned me not to see you more:
But do you envy me the air you breathe?

TITUS.

You can do all things, Lady. Stay, if you wish;
I'll not forbid it; but I feel my weakness;
It would be endless struggle, endless fear,
And endless watching to restrain my steps
From turning towards your beauty all day long.
I cannot speak, my heart forgets itself,
Remembering only that it loves you dearly.

BERENICE.

Well, Lord, and what could happen if I stayed?

Would all your Romans rise against me, Lord?

TITUS.

Who knows? Suppose they did? Suppose they clamoured?
I should be forced to back my choice by blood;
And if they did not speak and did not rise,
They would expect that some day I should pay them.
What would they not demand for their complaisance?
How can I guard the laws I cannot keep?

BERENICE.

You count the tears of Berenice for nothing?

TITUS.

That is unjust.

BERENICE.

Unjust? For unjust laws, that you can change,

You would condemn yourself to lifelong grief.
You say Rome has her rights. Have you not yours?
And are Rome's interests dearer than our own?
Come, speak!

TITUS.

Alas, my Queen, you torture me!

BERENICE.

You are the Emperor, Lord, and yet you weep.

TITUS.

Yes, Lady, it is true. I weep. I shudder.
When I accepted here the Emperor's purple,
Rome made me swear to maintain all her laws.
I must maintain them. Already many times
Rome has most strictly proved her Emperors;

They have obeyed her orders to the death
To their sons' deaths. Rome and the glory
of Rome
Have won the victory in those Roman hearts;
And I, in leaving you, do as they did,
But think I pass them in austerity.

BERENICE.

All things seem easy to your barbarism.
I will not speak again of staying here.
Think you I would have wished, ashamed,
despised,
To stay among the mocks of those who hate
me?
Do not expect me to break out against you,
But if the gods have pity of my tears,
And if your harsh injustice touches them,
And if before I die I, the sad Queen,
Wish for some bold avenger of my death,
I seek that bold avenger in your heart—

My love, my love that cannot be effaced,
My present grief and my past happiness,
Are the enemies that I will leave you, Lord.
I leave my vengeance unto them. Good-bye.

(*Exit.*)

PAULINUS.

Lord, she has gone. Will she then leave the country?

TITUS.

Paulinus, follow her. I think she is dying.
Run to her help.

PAULINUS.

My Lord, her women will be round her there,
They'll turn her thoughts. Fear not, the worst is over.
Go on, my Lord, the victory is yours:
I know you could not hear her without pity;
I couldn't keep from pity even in seeing her—
But you must take long views, and you must know

That happiness will come from this brief
pain:
All the wide world will ring with praise of
you.

TITUS.

I hate myself! I am a brute! Even Nero
Was not so cruel. Oh, I cannot bear it!
If Berenice should die!
Come, let Rome say what it may.

PAULINUS.

What, Lord?

TITUS.

I know not what I say.
Excess of trouble overwhelms my spirit.

PAULINUS.

Do not be troubled for what Rome will say.
The news that she has gone is spread abroad;
Rome, which was murmuring, is triumphing,
The altars are all smoking in your honour,

And in the streets the crown, singing your
virtues,
Crown all your statues with eternal laurel.

TITUS.

Ah, Rome! Ah, Berenice! Unhappy fate,
To be a lover and an Emperor!

(*Enter* ANTIOCHUS *and* ARSACES.)

ANTIOCHUS.

What have you done, my Lord? For Berenice
Is perhaps dying in Phenice's arms—
Hears and knows nothing, but cries out for
death;
And you alone, my Lord, can save her life.
Lord, why delay? Go, show yourself to her,
And speak one word.

TITUS.

And what word can I say?

(*Enter* RUTILIUS.)

RUTILIUS.

Lord, all the Tribunes, both the Consuls, and
The Conscript Fathers of the Roman Senate,
With one voice in the State's name call for you.
A great impatient crowd is with them, Lord;
They wait your presence in your audience chamber.

TITUS.

I hear you. O great gods, I beg you save
That heart so like to die!

PAULINUS.

Come, then, my Lord, we will attend the Senate.

ANTIOCHUS.

Go to the Queen first.

PAULINUS.

My Lord, you cannot! 'Twere indignity,
It were an insult to delay your coming,
Trampling the majesty of Rome beneath you.

TITUS.

Enough, Paulinus, I will hear the Senate.

(*Turns to* ANTIOCHUS.)

Prince, this is duty not to be put by;
Go, see the Queen. I hope on my return
She will not doubt my love.

CURTAIN.

ACT V.

ARSACES.

Where shall I find this all too faithful Prince?
Heaven grant that at this moment I may tell
him
Of happiness such as he dare not hope.
Oh, happy chance, he comes! Sir, the Queen
starts—

ANTIOCHUS.

She starts?

ARSACES.

She starts this evening.
She is most hurt that Titus leaves her there
So long in tears. She is not angry now,
But she renounces Rome and Emperor both,
And would be gone before the Romans see
her

In her distress, and glory in her flight.
She writes to Cæsar.

ANTIOCHUS.

And Titus?

ARSACES.

Titus has not appeared before the Queen,
For the great crowd of Romans rings him round,
Shouting the titles that the Senate gives him.
Those titles, and the crowd, and that applause,
Become so many honourable chains
To keep him from the Queen and steel his heart.
In spite of all the sad Queen's sighs and tears,
I think perhaps he will not see her more.

ANTIOCHUS.

Fortune has played with me, and many times
I have seen all my plans blown by the wind;

My heart scarce hopes, lest it should anger
Fortune.
But Titus comes.

(*Enter* TITUS.)

TITUS.

Let no one follow me.
Prince, I am come to keep my promise here—
Come with a broken heart. I wish to see her.

ANTIOCHUS.

So dies the hope that you had given me!

(*Enter* BERENICE *and* PHENICE.)

BERENICE.

I do not wish to hear. My mind's made up;
I wish to go. Why show yourself to me?
Why bring more bitterness to my despair?
Aren't you content? I do not wish to see
you.

TITUS.

Please listen!

BERENICE.

The time's past.

TITUS.

Lady, a word!

BERENICE.

No, not a word. You wish that I should go;
I am resolved to go, and I shall go.

TITUS.

No, stay.

BERENICE.

Why should I stay?
To hear the people cheer for my misfortune?
Do you not hear their cruel joy already?
What have I done to them that they should cheer?
What have I done—save love yourself too well!

TITUS.

It is a senseless crowd. Why listen to it?

BERENICE.

There's nothing here that does not wound my heart.

This room where we were lovers, you and I,
Come, Phenice.

TITUS.

You are unjust to me.

BERENICE.

You must go back, Lord, to the sacred Senate
Which now applauds you for your cruelty.
Are you content with what they say and vote?
And have you promised to forget my memory—
That will not expiate your love for me.
Have you made promise that you'll hate me always?

TITUS.

No, I have promised nothing. O my gods!
Lady, for five years you and I have loved;
I never loved you better than to-day,
Never so tenderly, never so dearly.

BERENICE.

"You loved," and yet at your command I go.
Do you find beauty in my heart's despair?
What use to me your heart's most useless
love?
Show me less love for very pity's sake,
And let me at the least set forth persuaded
That I am leaving one who is not sad
To see me go.

(TITUS *reads a letter.*)

That is a letter that I wrote to you;
Read it, most cruel one, and let me go.

TITUS.

You shall not go! I cannot grant you leave.
No, for your going is a stratagem,
You mean to kill yourself, and all I love
Will be a bleeding memory.

(BERENICE *falls upon a chair.*)

Call for Antiochus. Let him quickly come.
Lady, when first I knew we had to part,

I braced my soul for great unhappiness,
But did not once foresee the tiniest part
Of what I suffer now.
Some minutes since I met assembled Rome,
The Senate spoke to me, I did not hear,
I did not know if I were Emperor,
Or even a Roman, and I did not care.
Lady, I might say this: that I am ready
To give up Rome for you and follow you.
Even to the wide world's end to live with you.
But you yourself would blush if I said that,
You would not, without shame behold me so,
See me a worthless Emperor, without Empire,
March in your train, a spectacle to men.
No, to escape these torments of the soul
There is a nobler way, as you know well,
Which men too shaken by misfortune take
When sorrow upon sorrow following close,
Comes like a secret order to surrender.
If I be forced to watch your sorrow, lady,

If I be forced to see you long for death,
If I be forced always to dread your death,
As dread I must unless you swear to me
To spare your life, then look for other sorrow,
In this my state I can do anything.
I will not answer that my hand, before you
Put not a bloody end to this our parting.

BERENICE.

Alas.

TITUS.

No. There is nothing that I could not do.
So, madam, think that you control my life
And if I still am dear to you—

(*Enter* ANTIOCHUS.)

Come, Prince, come in!
I have sent for you to be my witness,
For to judge if I have loved untenderly.

ANTIOCHUS.

Lord, you have honoured me with your esteem,

And I can tell you here, Lord, I have been
A faithful friend to you—
A faithful friend although I was a rival.

TITUS.

My rival!

ANTIOCHUS.

Yes, it's time I told you that.
Lord, I have always worshipped Berenice,
Have striven to kill my love, but could not
do it.
At least I could be silent, and I was.
Your change of heart gave me some feeble
hope;
But the Queen's tears have wiped away that
hope.
She asked to see you, and I called you, Lord,
And you came back. You love her. She loves
you.
I pray the gods to keep their blows from you,
Or cast them upon me, whose life is yours.

BERENICE.

Too generous Princes, I am in despair!
Titus, you know my heart; I can say truly
I never longed for greatness nor for glory.
I loved—I loved and wished to be beloved.
I thought your love had come unto its end.
I know my error now. I know you love me.
I am not worth your trouble, nor deserve
That marrying me your Empire should be broken.
I think that for five years until to-day
My love for you has been a real love.
That is not all. Now, in this fatal moment,
By a last effort I must crown the rest;
I shall obey your orders to the last.
Good-bye, Sir. Reign. I shall not see you more,
Prince, after this farewell, you must be sure
I cannot listen to another's love;
But live, and make an effort like our own.

I love him, he loves me, and yet we part.
Go, Sir, far from me, and forget your love.
Good-bye. We'll be example to all time
Of the most tender and unhappy love
That ever was in dolorous history.
All is made ready. They are waiting for me.
No, follow not my steps. Good-bye!
For the last time, good-bye, Lord.

(*Exit.*)

ANTIOCHUS.

Woe is me!

CURTAIN.